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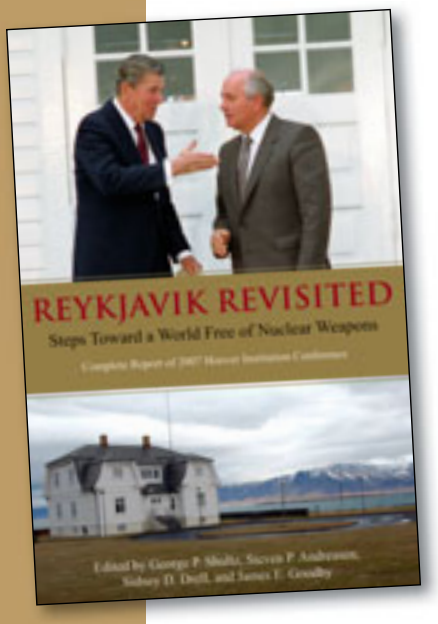

Edited by
George P. Shultz, Steven P. Andreasen, Sidney D. Drell, and James E. Goodby

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Inaugural Doggerel

The Scrapbook has been kept awake nights since Election Day, contemplating a tradition of sorts: Inaugural poetry. When America has been rescued from years of philistine Republican rule, incoming Democratic presidents have emphasized the point by inviting a poet to read an original work at the Inauguration.

It all began in January 1961, when John F. Kennedy invited fellow New Englander Robert Frost to declaim after Kennedy had finished his address. Frost had composed a poem, entitled "Dedication," for the occasion; but the 86-year-old poet was blinded by the glare of the sun off the snow on the Capitol grounds, couldn't read his manuscript, and instead recited "The Gift Outright," which he had written 20 years earlier.

As it happens, the blinding sunlight was fortuitous because, in The Scrapbook's opinion, "The Gift Outright" is a better poem than "Dedication." And despite the fact that the opening line of the former—"The land was ours before we were the land's"—was recently condemned in the *New York Times* as "embarrassing," Frost wins the prize, at least among inaugural poets, for distinction.

Admittedly, the competition has not been rigorous. In 1993 Bill Clinton recruited Maya Angelou to follow in Frost's footsteps, and Dr. Angelou, author of such popular classics as "Phenomenal Woman" and "Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas," did not disappoint. Her contribution, "On the Pulse of Morning," is not only considerably longer than "The Gift Outright," but provokes laughter (*The dinosaur, who left dry tokens / Of their sojourn here / On our planet floor*) as well as reflection (*Your armed struggles for profit / Have left collars of waste upon / My shore, currents of debris upon my breast*) and outright stupefaction (*So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew / The African and Native American, the Sioux / The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek / The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh*).

In 1997 the reelected President Clinton recruited an Arkansas bard, Miller Williams, for the same purpose; and while his inaugural poem—"Of History and Hope," get it?—isn't unintentionally entertaining, it's not in Frost's league, either.

Which brings us to Barack Obama. To be sure, America enjoys at the moment an abundance of distinguished poets who would not only jump at an inaugural commission, but might produce something approaching poetry. It is also possible that Obama, our first African-American president, might wish to commemorate the occasion with an inaugural poet who is also black. In which case, there is an obvious candidate less than two hours' driving time from Washington: Rita Dove, who teaches at the University of Virginia, was U.S. poet laureate during 1993-95, is a tireless public advocate for poetry, and writes suitably anodyne verse.

The Scrapbook has a better idea, though. Nothing against Professor Dove, mind you, but we believe that the swearing-in of America's chief executive officer requires the services of someone who is accustomed to commenting in rhyme on current events, would bring a smile to the faces of Jack Murtha, Helen Thomas, Barbara Boxer, and Anderson Cooper, and is comfortable on camera and in the corridors of power. This would open the door to our candidate, Charles Osgood of CBS, whose bow tie, sickly smile, cloying rhymes, and artificially whimsical manner would with any luck kill off the tradition of inaugural poetry, forever. ♦

A Prize, a Prize!

The Scrapbook offers its heartiest congratulations to Leonard Downie Jr., the recently retired editor of the *Washington Post*. Mr. Downie has just been awarded the Benjamin C. Bradlee "Editor of the Year" Award by the National Press Foundation.

We mention this not so much because of our admiration for Leonard Downie Jr.—more about him in a minute—but by virtue of our interest in the ancient journalistic practice of logrolling, back-scratching, mutual admiration, or whatever it is you want to call the business of news insiders shamelessly awarding prizes to each other. Downie, as we mentioned, was editor of the *Washington Post* from 1991 until this year; his predecessor at the *Post* (as readers might have guessed) was the same Benjamin C. Bradlee for whom the Benjamin C. Bradlee Award is named. Which, of course, was just awarded to Leonard Downie Jr.

The Scrapbook infers a couple of things from this. First, it explains why, year after year, Pulitzer prizes in journalism are equitably divided among deserving recipients at, oh, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

Second, it gives The Scrapbook some measure of hope. If this year's Benjamin C. Bradlee Award goes to Benjamin C. Bradlee's successor as editor at the *Post*, it stands to reason that, somewhere down the line, the coveted William Kristol Award might go to The Scrapbook! Of course, the fact that there is, at the moment, no William Kristol Award is not an obstacle: We'll just establish something called the Scrapbook Foundation, and make its principal business the yearly presentation of the William Kristol Award, complete with a thousand-dollar-per-table banquet, C-SPAN coverage, and

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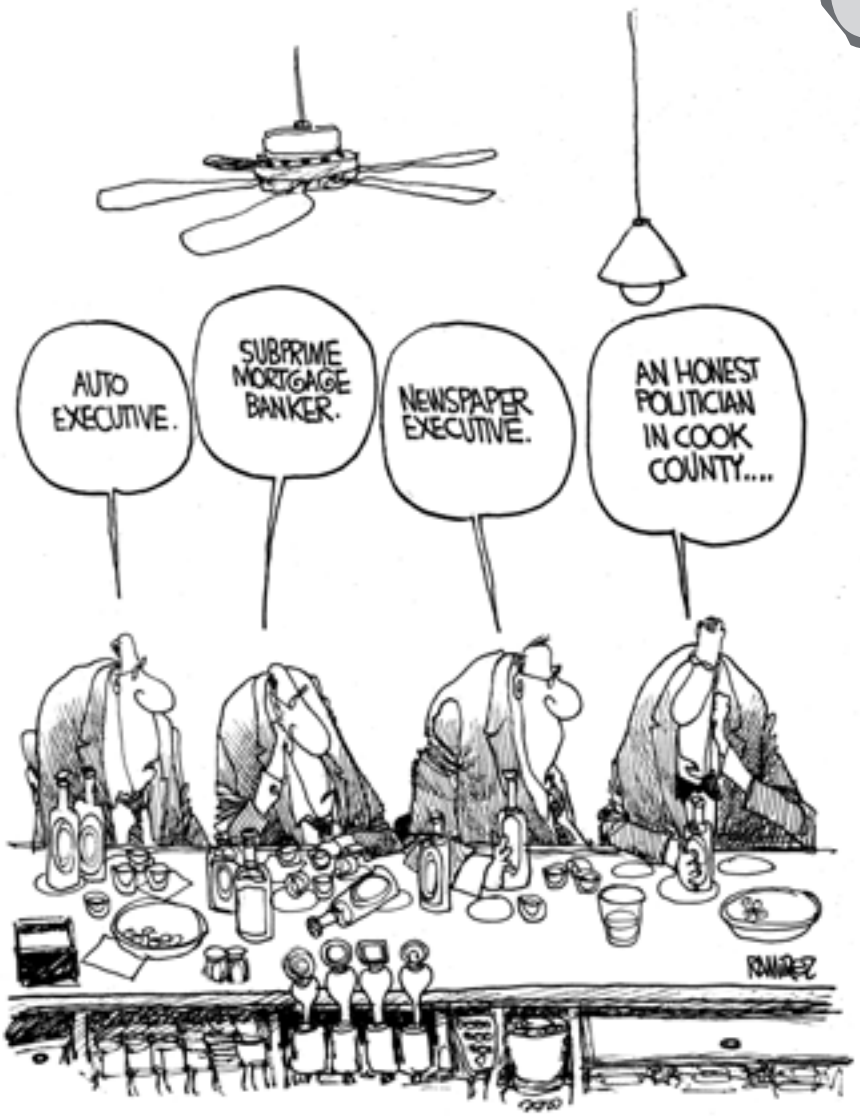

celebrity comedian/speaker. (We've already asked Benjamin C. Bradlee, Geneva Overholser, Bill Moyers, Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr., Michael Gartner, Joan Ganz Cooney, and Leonard Downie Jr. to serve on the board.)

And speaking of Mr. Downie, we are gratified to note, as well, that he has accepted a part-time teaching position in his retirement at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. As another famous journalist likes to say, we are not making this up. But yes, it gives us hope for The Scrapbook's golden years: an endowed chair, perhaps, at the Katie Couric School of Mass Media, or a well-paid lecture series at the Larry King Institute of Interview Science at the Keith Olbermann Graduate School of Advanced Communication, Mass Journalism, and Media Studies? ♦

Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., 1918-2008

Avery Cardinal Dulles died early Friday morning at the age of 90. He belonged to one of the archetypal families of America's old northeastern establishment. His great-grandfather was Benjamin Harrison's secretary of state. His great-uncle was Woodrow Wilson's. His father, John Foster Dulles, was Dwight Eisenhower's, and his uncle Allen led the CIA from 1953 to 1961.

But Avery Dulles chose a different path for himself. After service in the Second World War—for which he won the Croix de Guerre for his work as naval liaison to the Free French—he left Harvard and joined the Society of Jesus in 1946. In 2001, he was elevated to the cardinalate, his red hat a tribute to what he had achieved in the intervening decades. By the time of his death, from the after-effects of polio he contracted during the war, Cardinal Dulles had published over 700 theological articles and 23 books, becoming, along the way, the most important American Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He was, as well, a kind and gentle man. As our contributing editor Joseph Bottum notes, it is a measure of how much we will miss him that there is no conceivable successor who can fill the role he played in Catholic thought and American public life. ♦

Congratulations, Robert George

The Scrapbook salutes Princeton professor, constitutional scholar, and Weekly Standard contributor Robert P. George, who last week received the Presidential Citizens Medal, the second highest honor a president can confer on a civilian (after the Presidential Medal of Freedom). President Bush honored 24 Americans in all, including prison reform activist Charles W. Colson, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, and actor Gary Sinise. ♦

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Casual

Here We Come A-Wassailing

Little Lord Jesus no crying he makes and *What the gladsome tidings be* and *We three kings of Orient are*—to say nothing of *if thou knowst it telling*: Have you ever noticed just how weird the grammar and syntax of Christmas carols are? Or I guess that should be: *The songs of Christmas, noticed thou, / the strangeness filled with are—and how?*

The weirdest may be "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," whose phrasings are now so alien that even the first line gets regularly mangled—punctuated (and sung) as *God rest ye, merry gentlemen*, which suggests the gentlemen have made so merry that God needs to send them sleep, saving us from their wassailed warbling through the streets. The original meaning was "rest" in the sense of "keep," requiring the comma in a different place: *God rest ye merry, gentlemen*, a prayer that God keep joy in the hearts of those gentlemen. Not that this stops them from spiking the eggnog at the office party, but at least it might lessen the next day's hangover.

Meanwhile, a later verse tells us that *a blessèd angel came / and unto certain shepherds / brought tidings of the same*. What same? *How that in Bethlehem was born / the Son of God by name*, of course, and there's something wonderful about that line. It's incompetent poetry, filler to make a rhyme of the most naïve sort—*by name*, forsooth—and it's really charming in its way.

Even odder is the moment when we're told that the blessèd babe was laid within a manger—*the which his Mother Mary / did nothing take in scorn*. You'd think that would create some *which-witch* confusion for modern singers, but, in my experience, not even children hesitate at the line. English doesn't use *the which* much any more. Still, when carolers sing it out, the phrase seems to come from the authentic heart of the language. It feels right, somehow. It feels old.

That feeling of oldness, that power to seem traditional, remains a requirement of the music—even though the Christmas carol is essentially a Victorian invention. Not that people didn't sing seasonal songs before the nineteenth century. Ever since St. Augustine came to Canterbury, England has been full of local hymns, from "Christus Est Natus" to "The Cherry Tree Carol." But the Victorians—especially Henry Ramsden Bramley and John Stainer, with their 1871 collection *Christmas Carols New and Old*—were the ones who systematized it all.

DAVE MALAN

The universal Christmas canon they established contained some genuinely older songs: "The First Nowell," for instance, and the Wesleyan "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Much of what the Victorians did, however, was write new songs they tried to make sound traditional.

I used to mock the result: the endless "thees" and "thous," the pretentiously archaic syntax, the inversions and padding for rhyme. But then, this year, I was asked to write a Christmas song ("something new, but make it sound old, okay?"), and my sympathy for those poor carol writers suddenly increased. Easy this not is.

I started with Bramley's own "Carol for Christmas Eve"—a little-remembered song with a strong anthem for its melody but lyrics with all the worst Victorian faults. *Listen, Lordings, unto me, a tale I will you tell*, it opens, *which, as on this night of glee, in David's town befell*. Surely, I thought, it will be simple to take the melody and dash off words better than this mess.

Forty hours later, I was still at it. The Victorians were right: Christmas carols need to sound traditional; they have to feel old even when they're new. They want to come from the deep places of the language, because they're trying to speak of the deepest things of the world. Who could ever fulfill that desire? Despite all my wish to be inventive, I ended up with standard narrative:

Rise up, shepherds, raise your eyes:
the angels sweep the skies.
Like snowflakes, they swirl and dance,
a storm of wild surprise.
All cold stains of sin and winter
washed away by his birth:
love will make the world new green
and wonders fill the earth.

And the usual call for joy in the chorus:

Rise up (they sang), rise up (they sang).
Rise up and sing: the world will spring
fresh as the first day's morning.
Song of songs and king of kings—
such joys our Savior brings.

Standard, usual: the same old Christmas stuff. But maybe that's all right. The singers seemed to like it when I gave them the four verses I finally managed to scribble out. "It sounds old-fashioned," they said—the which is about as much praise as I could hope for.

Joseph Bottum

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the weekly Standard

Our Pakistan Problem

Could its holy warriors be the most dangerous?

The attack on Mumbai was in a way a primitive terrorist operation—individuals using machine guns and grenades. There were no high explosives, use of chemical weapons, or the like. The difference between ordinary terrorists, who kill at most hundreds, and mass-casualty ones, who aspire to kill thousands, is the coupling of fearless, wicked intelligence to firepower. If al Qaeda had access to nuclear weapons, the organization would surely melt New York City. If Iran's clerical regime, which blew up 19 American airmen at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996 (and has allowed al Qaeda to transit its borders) gets a nuke, its virulent anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism could translate into tens or hundreds of thousands of American and Israeli fatalities. Iran has the scientific intelligence that al Qaeda lacks. Al Qaeda has the single-minded will, unfazed by the possibility of earthly losses.

Which brings up the question of whether Pakistan's holy warriors have the ability to marry al Qaeda's sanguinary zeal with greater technical accomplishment?

Looking at Lashkar-e-Taiba ("the Army of the Good"), which likely conducted the attack on Mumbai, the answer would seem to be no. If the Lashkar still had real friends in the Pakistani military and in the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency—the most Islamist-friendly Muslim intelligence service in the world—its attacks in Mumbai would have been more murderous. So these holy warriors, widely feared in Kashmir and Pakistan for their savagery and their disciplined organization, are not yet the missing link for the jihadists who aspire to kill "the enemies of God" in huge numbers.

What is perhaps most encouraging about our struggle with al Qaeda since 9/11 is that the organization has so far been unable to develop real scientific resources. Al Qaeda obviously can learn from its mistakes. Think of the bungled attempt on the USS *The Sullivans* in the port of Aden in 2000, where the terrorists sank their own skiff. Ten months later, al Qaeda nearly sank the USS *Cole* in Aden using shaped charges successfully molded into the second boat. Islamic terrorist organizations, if they evolve and learn, can be much more lethal than the sum of their sloppy operational parts. But learning how to use plastique is much easier than deploying some kind of chemical, biological, or uranium-based device.

A principal reason al Qaeda has been unable to develop truly terrifying weaponry is the extremely poor quality of Arab higher education. The Arab Middle East produces thousands of graduates in engineering each year, but most of these young men and women possess only a rudimentary understanding of their field. The last 50 years have been devastating for preparatory schools, colleges, and universities in the region. The serious study of hard sciences and mathematics is for all practical purposes dead through much of the region. (Clerical Iran would not be on the threshold of a nuclear weapon if it were not for its Western-educated experts.) And of those who do study science in the West, how many want to become holy warriors? Evidence so far suggests none. There are no doubt many reasons why scientists have not become holy warriors. Mutatis mutandis, today's faithful Muslim scientists may find it very hard to join up with organizations that rigidly interpret God's will into orders to kill large numbers of human beings.

With al Qaeda now permanently headquartered in Pakistan, it's not hard to imagine the organization and its Arab Sunni core being absorbed by one of Pakistan's jihadist groups.

But Pakistan might be different. Its school system, at both preparatory and university levels, has not been as badly damaged by the ideological whirlwinds that have wreaked so much of the Middle East. British rule created educational institutions and, more important, an educational ethic that have weathered the political chaos and the increasingly religious militarism. And Pakistan sends a large number of first-rate minds abroad to receive the best Western educations. Could well-educated Pakistanis be subject to the clarion call of militant Islam?

Although founded by men of an overwhelmingly secular orientation, Pakistan can seem as religious as Egypt in the streets at prayer time. Secularism, though deeply embedded into the Pakistani elites, doesn't have a non-religious national identity to lock onto. At heart, Pakistan is

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just the Muslim alternative to Hindu India. Secular Pakistanis really only have the remnants of British culture to fall back on. The Turks, who are in a somewhat similar situation, have developed a tough nationalist identity by creating a largely fictional history marrying modern-day Turkey to the "historic" Turkic peoples of Anatolia. The Ottomans, Islam's most redoubtable soldiers, and their faith are making their way back into the modern Turkish identity, but the Turks, who have been absorbing European ideas and culture for several hundred years, have still probably produced the smallest number of holy warriors allied with al Qaeda.

It was a fool's errand to believe that Pakistan, a nation built exclusively on religious identity and which has regularly lost wars to its stronger, reviled Hindu (read polytheist) neighbor, would not become an Islamist-friendly society. From the beginning one of Pakistan's most influential figures was the great Islamist Sayyid Abu al-Ala Mawdudi (1903-79), who firmly established on the Indian subcontinent a very modern conception of spiritual renewal through holy war. Mawdudi was never wild about the idea of Pakistan, seeing it as a physical and spiritual restriction on Islam's borderless community of believers. With less overt viciousness than Sayyid Qutb, a better-known lodestar of Islamic radicalism, Mawdudi laid the intellectual groundwork that allowed others to see slaughter as divinely sanctioned.

Pakistani intellectuals, but especially Pakistani scientists and engineers, may be more susceptible to Islamist organizations than their Arab counterparts because their national identity is so soft and is challenged by a strong and successfully politicized religious identity. This is exaggerated by the continued defeats at the hands of Indians, who increasingly resemble Westerners (the ultimate Islamist enemy). Hindu India is by the decade becoming exponentially richer and more powerful while Islamic Pakistan continues its long slide into irrelevance. Pakistanis, especially the many educated in the West, have the brain power to turn al Qaeda and its allies into much more lethal organizations. Can al Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Taiba develop an appeal to highly educated men who have so far, elsewhere remained resistant to the call?

Pakistani militant groups have grown up in a philosophically sophisticated environment of Islamic militancy. Where once Lashkar was, more or less, a region-specific terrorist organization (focused on Jammu and Kashmir), its appetite for action is growing. All Islamic fundamentalist organizations, if they turn toward jihad, have the potential for a global mission. (Western-imposed borders on the historic Islamic community, the *umma*, are an insult to God; the enemy, the Judeo-Christian West, is everywhere and thus can be struck everywhere.)

It's a good bet that Lashkar and other Pakistani holy-warrior organizations will in the not too distant future operationally reach beyond the Indian subcontinent. With al Qaeda now permanently headquartered in Pakistan, it's not hard to imagine the organization and its Arab Sunni core being absorbed by a group like Lashkar. Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5, which is America's best frontline defense against Pakistani jihadists who carry British passports—and tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis, at home and abroad, carry such passports, which make travel to the United States easy—gives the impression that we may have already reached the absorption point. These Pakistani jihadist groups are larger than al Qaeda ever was, and their size is a distinct intelligence vulnerability, especially if the Pakistani intelligence agency is ever willing to move aggressively against them and the larger religious movements that they feed on.

Nonetheless, it seems that al Qaeda may be on the verge of a big growth spurt in the subcontinent. In the Arab world, the birthplace of modern Islamic holy war, al Qaeda's prospects have dimmed. Odds are Osama bin Laden has lost the "decisive battle" in Mesopotamia, and with it, eventually, the battle for hearts and minds among Arabs.

Operations inevitably follow philosophy. As the jihadist philosophy expands in Pakistan and likely into India's 150 million-strong Muslim population, so will operations. Hezbollah became an extremely deadly organization precisely because it drank so deeply from revolutionary Iran's global call to rally the world's Muslims against the United States. The Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organization of Ayman al-Zawahiri became something to fear when its objectives transcended the Nile valley. Operational competence goes up as Islamic holy warriors look over the horizon. Global missions draw global talent. Even without weapons of mass destruction, these terrorists could bring on a terrible clash between India and Pakistan.

We will have to wait anxiously to discover whether Pakistan's Islamist intellectuals and holy warriors can go where an Arab-run al Qaeda has been unable to reach—into the laboratories and minds of men with sky-high IQs. European and American intelligence and security services ought to be increasingly attentive to the possibility that the Pakistani jihadist call will have more appeal and try to monitor those Pakistanis who could make all the difference in the acquisition of nuclear and chemical weapons.

Still, Pakistan may follow the examples of Iraq, Egypt, and Algeria, where all the Islamist savagery finally undid the sympathy of large parts of the population for holy warriors. Jihadists inevitably become infatuated with killing, making their understanding of God's wrath just a bit too much to swallow, even for Muslims who loathe the West. Until that happens, though, we will have to strengthen our intelligence capacities and continue to act preemptively against terrorist plots, and to hope that the Pakistani military, a forceful, proud, and hierarchical institution, will itself act against men who don't recognize its authority—and who blow up women and children.

—Reuel Marc Gerecht, for the Editors

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Anti-Semitism in Iran

Matthias Küntzel ("Defining Jew-Hatred Down," November 17) points out that the anti-Semitism expressed by Iran's leaders is in no way mitigated by the fact that "the Iranian regime tolerates the presence of a Jewish community in Tehran." Küntzel's point is particularly important since some former U.S. officials have indeed pointed to the treatment of Jews in Iran as proof that Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is not as terrible as generally assumed.

For example, former State Department official Martin Indyk has been quoted on Israel Radio as saying it is wrong to compare Ahmadinejad to Adolf Hitler, since "the fact that 25,000 Jews live largely unharmed in Iran means Nazi parallels are inappropriate." Similarly, former Pentagon official Dov Zakheim has been quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "Iran doesn't treat its 20,000 Jews as wretchedly as its rhetoric would suggest." The *Times* columnist who interviewed him then added: "Iran continues to be home to more Jews than any Middle Eastern country save Israel."

The size of the Jewish community in Iran is not proof that the Jews are well treated. Sometimes factors such as family ties, poverty, or hope for a change in government are sufficient to persuade people to stay in a country where they are mistreated. Recall that in 1937—fully four years after Hitler's rise to power—Germany was still home to more Jews than any other Western European country. That wasn't because they enjoyed Hitler's rule.

In her book *Beyond Belief*, Professor Deborah Lipstadt describes how, in the 1930s, the U.S. public's ability to recognize the evil nature of the Hitler regime was undermined by reports from wishful thinkers who insisted that the treatment of Germany's Jews was not as bad as people assumed. It would be a tragedy if today's pundits repeated that mistake by minimizing the suffering of Iran's beleaguered Jewish community.

Rafael Medoff
Director
The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies
Washington, D.C.

Parkersburg Landmark

I was attracted to Stefan Beck's article because of the title ("How to Write," November 3) and then was pleasantly surprised and delighted to read about my hometown's Carnegie Library, where I spent much of my paycheck every month before I was married.

I am curious what brought him to my happy but unheralded hometown of Parkersburg, W.Va., to visit that great bookstore where one could gladly set up tent and spend a week. How did he find us?

Thanks to Mr. Beck for his important article, mostly, and to a somewhat lesser extent for visiting and writing about my hometown's great little (actually quite big) bookstore.

Mike Azinger
Highland, Ind.

How to Save Capitalism

I agree with William Kristol when he writes that the challenge for the GOP over the next four years will be "to figure out how to save capitalism from its own worst aspects and most damaging tendencies" ("Beyond Doom & Gloom," November 24).

The answer is both simple and difficult. The simple part is in observing that we, as a society, must be in accord with Judeo-Christian ethics for capitalism to survive. This is especially so for our elite. But when secularism is the *de facto* state religion, a Darwinian survival of the fittest philosophy prevails and poisons everything. This leads to uncontrolled greed.

The difficulty comes in trying to figure out how to convert our elites to the faith that they, as a class, have long abandoned.

Peter Skurkiss
Stow, Ohio

Russian Technology

I just read Reuben F. Johnson's article on the Russian military ("Tennis Shoes and Stolen Toilets") in the November 24 issue. It reminds me that every time I hear about the international space station, I think about the fact that substantial portions of it were built by the same people who built the "MiG-25 ... with vacuum-tube technology." I would be scared to death to be a resident of the space station.

Peter Farb
Larsen, Wis.

Biden's Memoirs

I just finished reading Matthew Continetti's article "Biden: the Book" (November 24) and laughed so hard I had to send my thanks. The nation is in such bad shape and likely to continue that way for a long time. A good, hearty laugh is not only appreciated but required. I mean that. I really mean that and I am serious!

John De Gennaro
Kingman, Ariz.

• • •

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Pssst . . . Wanna Buy a Senate Seat?

Saddened, sobered, appalled—what does Obama really think about Governor Blagojevich?

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

GARY LOCKE

"Saddened and sobered"—that was Barack Obama's first response to the corruption charges against Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, charges that include an attempt to sell Obama's old Senate seat to the highest bidder.

"Obviously, like the rest of the people of Illinois, I am saddened and sobered by the news that came out of the U.S. attorney's office today," Obama said before a meeting on energy with Vice President-elect Joe Biden and former Vice President Al Gore.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Wrong emotion. If someone had taken a poll of the rest of the people of Illinois that day I'd guess very few of them would have offered "saddened" in response to a question on their feeling about Blagojevich's efforts to make money on just about everything that happened in Illinois over the past six years.

Outraged? Certainly. Disgusted? Sure. Entertained? Yep. F—ing sick of this s— from these a—holes? If you're Rod Blagojevich.

But "saddened" is the kind of reaction you have if a friend loses a spouse or if someone you trust lets you down. It's not the kind of reaction you have if you've run a campaign for a politician only to have him embarrass himself in wiretaps from a federal investigation into his six-year orgy of corruption.

In an interview before the election, Obama's newly named White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, suggested that the president-elect did have such a relationship with Blagojevich.

Ryan Lizza wrote in the *New Yorker*:

> Rahm Emanuel, a congressman from Chicago and a friend of Obama's, told me that he, Obama, David Wilhelm, who was Blagojevich's campaign co-chair, and another Blagojevich aide were the top strategists of Blagojevich's victory. He and Obama "participated in a small group that met weekly when Rod was running for governor," Emanuel said. "We basically laid out the general election, Barack and I and these two."

Wilhelm would later say that Emanuel had overstated Obama's role. And by most accounts Obama and Blagojevich were not terribly close (and not close at all after the public learned that Blagojevich's administration was the subject of a federal investigation). Blagojevich was conspicuously absent from Obama's victory celebration in Grant Park on Election Night, and he had no speaking role at the Democratic National Convention. One Illinois political insider said that while some donor sharing was natural given that both men were rising stars in the Democratic party, he was surprised that there wasn't more overlap.

Blagojevich was elected in 2002 and, according to the 76-page affidavit released by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald last week, almost immediately began a "pay-to-play" scheme that aggressively solicited campaign donations from those who wanted to do business with the state and denied state business to those who refused to participate. Even by the standards of a state known for its dirty politics, the audacity of Blagojevich's corruption was breathtaking. He tried to have editorial board members of the *Chicago Tribune* fired for criticizing him. He traded seats on important

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state boards and commissions for campaign cash.

Most egregiously, though, Blagojevich tried to sell Obama's Senate seat. In one taped conversation he declared the Senate seat "a f—g valuable thing," adding, "You just don't give it away for nothing." Blagojevich believed that Obama wanted Valerie Jarrett, a longtime friend and confidante of the president-elect, to have the seat, so he schemed to extract goodies from the incoming administration. At one point, Blagojevich mused about being named secretary of health and human services in exchange for appointing Jarrett to the seat. At another, he developed a scheme in which he would take a high-paying job as head of "Change to Win," a union-backed advocacy group.

After the story broke on December 9, reporters quickly focused on a series of events that began five days after Obama was elected. On November 9, CNN reported that Obama wanted Blagojevich to appoint Jarrett to succeed him. WLS, a Chicago talk-radio station, reported the same thing.

But a little more than 24 hours later, CNN reported that Jarrett would not be getting the job. A "top Obama adviser" explained the decision this way. "While [Obama] thinks she would be a good senator, he wants her in the White House."

What happened? According to the affidavit, Blagojevich held a two-hour conference call on November 10 with a large number of advisers. He spoke openly about his desire to get something in exchange for the seat and schemed with his advisers about his best options.

This chain of events led to speculation last week that one of Obama's advisers learned about the conference call and Blagojevich's desire for some kind of quid pro quo for appointing Jarrett. With this knowledge, Jarrett withdrew from consideration before anyone from the Obama transition could be accused of cooperating with Blagojevich. It's speculation, but it fits the timeline.

According to an individual with knowledge of internal Obama transition deliberations, that speculation is wrong. This person says that while Jarrett wanted to be appointed to the Senate, Obama always wanted Jarrett with him at the White House.

Roland Martin, a Chicago political commentator with close ties to Obama, says the president-elect formally offered Jarrett a White House job on November 9, while she was on business in New York. Jarrett told Martin about the offer the next day and said he could break the story when the Obama transition was ready to make a formal announcement. Martin says Jarrett told him she would be an assistant to the president and head of the White House Office of Public Liaison. Martin broke the news on November 14.

So what did Obama know? He has said—repeatedly and categorically—that he had no contact with Blagojevich about his replacement. And at a press conference last Thursday, during which Obama upgraded his reaction from "saddened and sobered" to "appalled," he promised to make public details of any contacts that his staff had with Blagojevich or the governor's staff about the Senate seat.

Even with a 76-page complaint, a lengthy press conference by Fitzgerald, and lots of reporting in the public record, we know very little about what actually happened. But, as Obama cheerfully recalled at his press conference Thursday, that Blagojevich had used an obscenity to describe him (the affidavit specifies "motherf—er"). And while there is still the possibility that the Blagojevich scandal will tarnish Obama and his advisers—if Obama fails to make public a complete and accurate listing of the contacts with Blagojevich, for instance—the complaint makes clear that Blagojevich was frustrated and angry that the Obama team was not open to his advances.

"They're not willing to give me anything but appreciation," Blagojevich said of Obama and his staff. "F—them." ♦

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The Unlikeliest Congressman

Anh Cao, Republican from New Orleans.

BY KEVIN VANCE

After devastating losses on November 4, Republicans finished the 2008 election cycle on a high note. Immigration lawyer and community leader Anh "Joseph" Cao (pronounced "gow") last Saturday narrowly defeated indicted Democratic congressman William "Dollar Bill" Jefferson in Louisiana's Second District, becoming the first Republican to represent New Orleans in over a century. When he's sworn in, Cao will also have the distinction of being the nation's first Vietnamese-American member of Congress.

The election was pushed back to December 6 because of Hurricane Gustav. In this majority African-American district, turnout collapsed without Barack Obama at the top of the ticket. Cao acknowledges that low turnout was a major factor in his victory, since voters embarrassed by Jefferson were more likely to turn out than voters supportive of Jefferson. Consider that Jefferson won reelection two years ago *after* federal officials found $90,000 in $100 bills in his freezer (the cash had come from an FBI informant as part of a bribery investigation).

Cao's impressive life story proved to be a plus in a year when heavily Democratic New Orleans was more concerned with integrity than political ideology. He left Vietnam as a child after the fall of Saigon, with two of his seven siblings. After finishing high school and college in Texas, he traveled abroad to help the world's poor as a Jesuit seminarian. But he left the order before becoming a priest, and became an immigration lawyer in New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina, Cao worked to bring electricity and other services back to New Orleans East.

Anh 'Joseph' Cao with daughter Betsy and wife Kate Hieu Hoang

ASSOCIATED PRESS

While conservatives may be heartened by Cao's victory, the congressman-elect calls himself a moderate and only became a Republican last year at the urging of Bryan Wagner, whom he describes as his "mentor." Wagner made history in the 1980s by becoming New Orleans's first GOP city councilman since Reconstruction.

Wagner said that when he met Cao "it was instantly obvious that he was incredibly intelligent, incredibly humble, and that he would be an excellent public servant." Wagner says he suggested Cao become a Republican because of their shared admiration for John McCain. He thought this year's congressional race would be a good campaign for Cao, because of the contrast between the ex-seminarian and the indicted congressman.

Cao preferred not to discuss specific issues when I spoke to him on the Friday after his election, but he did give some indications as to what kind of congressman he will be. He thinks of himself as a reformer above all, who can help rebuild his city and accelerate economic development. Like other New Orleans reformers, he supports scrapping the city's antiquated charity hospital system in favor of a community-based health care delivery model.

When it comes to broad philosophical issues, Cao is inclined to favor private over government-run health care and thinks the best way to alleviate poverty is through education. He doesn't shy from talking about social issues and believes life begins at conception. "I hope we can all take a stance to protect life," he says. Cao is reminiscent of Bobby Jindal, Louisiana's reform-minded, pro-life, Catholic, Indian-American governor.

In other areas, though, Cao departs from conservative orthodoxy. He supports comprehensive immigration reform. "I hope that we can look at issues of immigration reform even before we secure our borders," he says. To win back power in Congress, Republicans need "to be more inclusive of minorities, not so anti-immigrant, and to basically have an open and progressive view of certain issues, such as climate change and alternative energy," he says.

Already, Cao is being compared to one-term Republican congressman Michael Flanagan who won a heavily Democratic Chicago district against indicted congressman Dan Rostenkowski in 1994 only to be defeated two years later (by disgraced Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, incidentally).

Wagner thinks his protégé has a brighter future than that. "The same

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people who said he had no chance this year are the ones who say that he doesn't next year."

Cao deflects questions about his political ambitions: "At this point, . . . the only thing I'm concerned about is rebuilding and representing the people of the Second District," he says.

While that sounds like something any politician would say, Wagner doesn't think Cao is the kind of politician who is always contemplating the next step forward in his political career, much less reelection. "Joseph has the idea of serving people, and if he can do a job that meets his standards he'll be happy to run again, but he's his own harshest critic."

Maybe in two years New Orleans voters will decide they like having a congressman who is his own harshest critic. ♦

Mr. President, Liberate Zimbabwe

A good deed for Bush's final days.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

In the final days of his presidency, George W. Bush will face an avalanche of requests. Well-connected political hands will inquire if so-and-so could receive a coveted pardon, lobbyists will ask for that last-minute executive order, obscure foreign leaders will finally call in chits for having joined the Coalition of the Willing. In the routine and predictable nature of these appeals, Bush's remaining time in office will be little different from those of his predecessors granting last-minute favors to the privileged and powerful. But Bush has an opportunity to benefit some of the world's most destitute individuals and to secure a positive and lasting legacy in a country that has suffered under the boot of a megalomaniacal thug for decades.

Zimbabwe, which for the past eight years has been careening from one disaster to another, is today on the precipice of humanitarian catastrophe. Ruled by Robert Mugabe for nearly 29 years, the country has been in political stalemate since March when Mugabe lost a presidential and parliamentary election to Morgan Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change. Mugabe rejected the results and won a rigged follow-up. He was then coaxed by African leaders into negotiations to establish a coalition government, but has refused to cede control of the army, the police force, or the central bank. He uses the negotiations to prevent any handover of power to the real winners of the country's election and to frustrate all attempts at economic reform.

What ought to bring Zimbabwe to the forefront of international concern is a spreading cholera epidemic, incubated in sewage-infested townships, which threatens to overtake the country and the region. The World Health Organization has confirmed nearly 800 deaths so far (though it believes many more have perished) and 16,000 more cases. Most of the country's hospitals are inoperative, and the Zimbabwean government has no means to stanch the spread of the disease. Indeed, it couldn't prevent the initial outbreak, which it blames on Western governments' poisoning of water wells.

Given the massive refugee outflows to bordering states and an intensified mortality level brought about by the policies of the Mugabe regime over the past several years, it is no longer possible to even state Zimbabwe's current population. U.S. government estimates of the number of citizens residing in-country range from 5.8 million to 12 million. Most of these people are in need of emergency food supplies, and they will starve unless outside actors like the United Nations or the United States comes to their help.

Calls for Mugabe's forcible removal are growing stronger. For some time now, the president of neighboring Botswana, Ian Khama, has supported intervention to topple Mugabe. He was joined earlier this month by the Kenyan prime minister, Raila Odinga, who said that "it's time for African governments . . . to push [Mugabe] out of power." He told Tsvangirai to boycott the stalled power-sharing talks as the negotiations, with their patina of international legitimacy, have become a way for an illegitimate leader to maintain his grip on power—not unlike another "peace process" in a different part of the world. Even South Africa's Desmond Tutu supports intervention.

African leaders have long protected Mugabe, fearful of the precedent that ushering out a liberation-era hero could set for their own political survival. Last week, amid the growing chorus of calls for Mugabe to step down, a spokesperson for the chairman of the African Union said, "Only dialogue between the Zimbabwean parties, supported by the AU and other regional actors, can restore peace and stability to that country." Mugabe, meanwhile, continues to threaten violence against anyone who would try to ease him or his party out of power. "We won this country through the barrel of the gun and we will defend it the way we won it," a government spokesman said.

Mugabe has the backing of both Russia and China, meaning that, as with NATO's intervention in Bos-

James Kirchick, who has reported from Zimbabwe, is an assistant editor at The New Republic.

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nia, military action would have to be taken outside the parameters of the United Nations. With the vocal support of Botswana and Kenya, an American- and British-led force could work alongside African troops to decapitate the regime and facilitate the delivery of emergency aid and the installation of the duly elected government. The Zimbabwean military is poorly equipped and demoralized; last month, soldiers rioted in response to the government's failure to pay them on time (a task complicated by the fact that the country faces 231 million percent inflation). In the face of professional armies, many units would surrender or revolt against their commanders. "The [Zimbabwean] military would be very weak and have a difficult time in resisting any credible intervention," says J. Anthony Holmes, a former Foreign Service officer now with the Council on Foreign Relations.

A few days ago, I chatted online with the Zimbabwean fixer I worked with during a visit to the country in 2006. He has not been wanting for work. Since the March election, a steady stream of journalists has come to report on the stalled negotiations and needed his skills at ferrying them around the country, arranging interviews, and dodging military cordons and security operatives. But he finds the utter lack of political progress frustrating and the humanitarian situation unendurable. "I have given up," he says. He described the horrors he saw recently taking a French journalist to the cholera-infected area. "He cried," my friend told me.

"It is time for Robert Mugabe to go," Bush said last week, recognizing the growing momentum in favor of a humanitarian intervention to save Zimbabwe. "Across the continent, African voices are bravely speaking out to say now is the time for him to step down." Asked to reflect upon his legacy in an interview last month, Bush said, "I'd like to be a president [known] as somebody who liberated 50 million people and helped achieve peace." In his final days in office, he could liberate millions more. ♦

Thirty Years of Reform in China

Economic collapse may soon bring political crisis.

BY GORDON G. CHANG

As Beijing celebrates the 30th anniversary of its reform era this month—generally considered to have begun with the accession of Deng Xiaoping—the dominant narrative in the world is that this is China's century. This perception is almost entirely based on the country's roaring economy, which has, according to official statistics, averaged 9.8 percent annual growth during the period.

Yet at this very moment the Chinese economy is moving from expansion to contraction and decelerating rapidly. In 2007, China's gross domestic product grew by an astounding 11.9 percent. In the first quarter of this year, growth was 10.6 percent. Second quarter: 10.1 percent. Third quarter: 9.0. This quarter, analysts expect 5.8 percent growth. If the trend continues—and there is every reason to believe it will—next year the Chinese economy will expand by one or two percent—or maybe not at all. China is experiencing a greater and faster economic slide than almost any other country this year.

Why is this happening? First, China's growth has been extraordinarily rapid; 2007 was the fifth straight year of double-digit growth. When we look back at recent history, the last two half-decades of such fast expansion both ended in downturns, a mild one at the end of the last decade and a severe one after Tiananmen. Second, spending for the Olympics, which provided a large stimulus, will no longer help. Third, China's export-led economy is vulnerable to weakening consumer sentiment across the globe—especially in the United States.

Last year, sales to America accounted for all but $5.9 billion of the country's overall trade surplus of $262.2 billion. A weak U.S. economy has already been a factor in the closure in the first half of 2008 of about 67,000 factories, many of them in the country's export powerhouse, the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province. In October, electricity output fell for the first time in almost four years. In November, growth in industrial output fell to a 13-year low, and the value of Chinese exports fell for the first time in more than 7 years.

Beijing, in short, has been relentlessly pursuing an economic model that is particularly ill-suited to a faltering global economy. The textbook remedy, economists say, would be for the central government to stimulate internal consumption to take up the slack. Yet consumption's role in the economy has been sliding, dropping from its historical average of about 60 percent to 35 percent today, undoubtedly the lowest rate in the world. The steps Beijing has taken to stimulate exports—like holding down the value of its currency—inevitably discourage consumption. And it will take years for Chinese technocrats to reorient their economy once they make the decision to do so.

That leaves investment to create growth. China's State Council, the central government's cabinet, last month said it would spend $586 billion over 9 calendar quarters on 10 major areas. Despite the initial global fanfare greeting the announcement, the program seems unlikely to reverse the economic downtrend. For one thing,

Gordon G. Chang is the author of The Coming Collapse of China.

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the program is not big enough—only about a quarter of the spending is not already contemplated in the current five-year plan. For another, the new package, by concentrating on the long-term building of infrastructure, will not have much effect until 2010 or maybe even 2011. Pump priming loses its effectiveness over time, and this plan is merely the latest installment in a 10-year fiscal stimulus campaign begun by former premier Zhu Rongji. Only 1 percent of the $586 billion will go to desperately needed social services. The Chinese economy will thus remain heavily dependent on exports and investment—and be unsustainable in the long run.

Despite the seriousness of the situation they face, China's leaders seem unable to break from their old way of doing things. China's economy has progressed about as far as it can within its existing political framework. Further reform would threaten the power of the Communist party. A true market economy requires (among much else) the rule of law, which means constricting the power of government. Because such limitations on power are incompatible with the party's ambitions to continue to dominate society, the country cannot make much more progress toward them.

Technocrats promoted fast growth, and fast growth has created dislocations, such as bad bank loans, unfunded social welfare obligations, a degraded environment, and rampant corruption. These problems have not posed serious threats because increases in economic output in past years have masked them. But as growth slows, the dislocations are becoming too big to ignore—and probably too big to solve.

Yet even if the party could solve each and every one of these problems in short order, which it cannot, the country's rulers would face a seemingly insurmountable challenge. Those who are optimistic about the future of the People's Republic point to all the growth and progress of the last three decades since Deng Xiaoping grabbed power. China has indeed come a long way, but that is precisely why the one-party state is in such jeopardy.

Sustained modernization undermines authoritarian systems. Unimaginable societal transformation has taken place in China at unheard of speed thanks in large part to Deng's reforms. One of the results of this rapid social change has been the widespread defiance of authority. At this moment, one of the country's most popular heroes—executed at the end of last month—is a man who entered a police compound in Shanghai and killed six officers while wounding four others on July 1, the anniversary of the founding of the party. Outside his trial, middle-class Chinese chanted "down with the Communist party" and carried banners emblazoned with "Long Live the Killer." Even among the relatively well-to-do in the important coastal cities, the country's ruling organization is losing legitimacy.

Labor unrest has spread throughout China, but especially in Guangdong province, where many of the country's toy manufacturers are located.

After abandoning ideology, the party's primary source of legitimacy became the delivery of never-ending prosperity. It should therefore come as no surprise that recent economic troubles have coincided with an extraordinary wave of protests. Starting this summer, citizens in various locations have ransacked government offices, attacked police, and burned official vehicles.

Unemployed workers in the Pearl River Delta, moreover, have been taking to the streets and engaging in sit-ins in their factories to demand back pay. At first, the protests were small, as only marginal factories went out of business. The larger demonstrations—numbering in the thousands—came when the "big ship" toy manufacturers began to fail two months ago amid declining orders from major toy companies such as Mattel and Hasbro.

Labor unrest has since spread throughout China, but especially in Guangdong province, where many of the country's toy manufacturers are located. Even factory owners, facing the prospect of closure, have demonstrated against the government. Protests are bound to become larger, more frequent, and more violent as the economy continues to weaken and as workers begin to feel safety in numbers. Chinese workers—even poor migrants—are starting to think they can get what they want by defying the authorities, because governments have tried to buy off protesters with small payments. Yet with the accelerating failure of industry—more than half of China's toy factories went out of business in the first seven months of this year, for instance—local officials have fewer resources to fund benefits to those who have suddenly lost their livelihoods.

The protests by laid-off workers, as unsettling as they are, cannot be the most worrisome development to the Communist party. Beginning in early November and continuing into this month, taxi and bus drivers have gone on strike in a dozen major cities. Beijing, which has always felt confident about controlling one-off demonstrations, realizes the risk to the regime when citizens across the country act together.

The Chinese Communist party has remained in power by preventing competitors from banding together to form nationwide organizations. Yet today on the Internet and in other forums, the Chinese people are having national conversations for the first time in their history. As a result, citizens with common grievances are beginning to act in unison, posing a challenge of the first order to the regime. Mao consolidated his power by dividing the Chinese people into small units and isolating them from each other. Now, in a modernizing society, they are putting themselves back together. This is perhaps the most important legacy of 30 years of reform—and what Mao feared most. ♦

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The Unwisdom of Crowds

Financial panics still require what Walter Bagehot prescribed—that practical men violate their own principles

By Christopher Caldwell

Neither Barack Obama nor John McCain had much of value to say about the financial crisis as it raged through the headlines this fall. Rather than shred their campaign strategies, they played it safe, as most politicians would have. But in the name of justice we ought to recall that there was one candidate who *did* foresee our predicament with considerable accuracy when it still lay far in the future. Ron Paul, in almost every speech he made during the Republican primaries, spoke of bubbles, reckless credit growth, and the "unsustainability" of present policy. So why isn't there more demand for the common-sense solutions he put forward? Because common sense is not much use in a financial panic.

This was the great discovery of Walter Bagehot, the prolific 19th-century essayist and journalist, who was editor of the *Economist* from 1860 to 1877. (His name rhymes with *gadget*.) Ninety-nine percent of the time, *common sense* is a synonym for *practicality*. But in a serious banking crisis, doing the commonsensical thing—hunkering down and counting your pennies—has proved to be not practical at all. Bagehot's *Lombard Street* is an insider's look at the Bank of England, and at the principles on which political and financial leaders act when advanced economies come under pressure. Those principles are depressing in the extreme for anyone with an uncomplicated idea of how a democracy works. But they are effective. That is why, in the so-called Anglo-Saxon world, Bagehot's book still provides the bedrock of policy thinking during financial emergencies, including our present one.

Walter Bagehot

Lombard Street was published in 1873, seven years after the sudden collapse of Overend, Gurney & Co., a bank that lost £11 million, spread panic among investors, sparked a run, and became "the model instance of all evil in business." The crisis made such a deep impression on British finance and government that the country did not have another bank run for 141 years—not until Northern Rock collapsed in the summer of 2007. (English investors must have longer memories than American ones. Most of our own noxious subprime mortgages were contracted, and the securities built on them concocted, *after* Enron became our own model instance of evil in 2001.) It was the Bank of England that took charge of averting panic, during the Overend, Gurney crisis and thereafter. It did so by injecting credit into the economy, by bailing people out. Bagehot approved of this. Many ordinary retailers could not pay their suppliers until they got the money for the things they sold. Without credit, they would be ruined, and the ruin would spread to those to whom they owed money. This was not a question of moral failing, it was just the way a modern economy worked.

But the modern economic system interacts with the modern political system—democracy—in a rather uncomfortable way. Indeed, at more than one juncture in *Lombard Street*, Bagehot framed the problem of booms and busts as part of the "increasingly democratic structure of English commerce." People in a democracy are most comfortable when their institutions do the same things that they would do as individuals. In a crisis, banks—like everyone else—reflexively hoard their money. But a central bank must do the opposite. It must lend freely.

This was the most basic affront to common sense that the Bank of England presented, but it was not the worst.

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard. *His* Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West *will be published by Doubleday in July.*

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The worst was that the bank could carry out its necessary duties as a lender of last resort only by breaking the law. The basis of the bank's operating procedure—and of its soundness—was the Bank Act of 1844. We would call it a regime of sound money. It included stringent caps on the ratio of notes issued to reserves held. These caps were hewed to when the economy was running smoothly. Yet at the time Bagehot was writing, a quarter century later, the law had already been suspended three times. Not just that. "No similar occasion has ever yet occurred," Bagehot wrote, "in which it has not been suspended." So the law on which the solvency of the British nation rested was ironclad, except when someone felt a need to break it.

Stranger still, never did the Bank of England acknowledge its duty as the lender of last resort. Some of its governors even denied that any such duty existed. Bagehot thought the bank should come clean about what it really was:

> There should be a clear understanding between the Bank and the public that, since the Bank hold our ultimate banking reserve, they will recognise and act on the obligations which this implies—that they will replenish [the reserve] in time of foreign demand as fully, and lend it in times of internal panic as freely and readily, as plain principles of banking require.

But there was a reason for the central bankers' dissembling. If the bank ever acknowledged a duty to rescue banks by generous extensions of credit, it would create a form of moral hazard. Thomson Hankey, a Bank of England director whom Bagehot much admired (and to whom the financial writer James Grant devotes an admiring essay in his new book *Mr. Market Miscalculates*), called Bagehot's lender-of-last-resort views "the most mischievous doctrine ever broached in the monetary or banking world in this country."

In practice, Bagehot was right and Hankey was wrong. The bank was beyond question the lender of last resort. In principle, Hankey was right and Bagehot was wrong. Unless there was a real, credible threat that a bank would be allowed to fail, the guarantee of rescue would simply get priced into any financial bubble that developed, making things worse when the bubble popped. The situation required what we would now call "strategic ambiguity"—both Hankey's doctrine and Bagehot's practice, which contradicts it.

The situation today requires the same mix. Central banking is thus often a high-stakes game of chicken. And sometimes, when banks enter the game insufficiently scared, it will be played out to the end. It certainly was in September when the U.S. Treasury terrified the financial world by *not* coming to the rescue of Lehman Brothers. This was a catastrophe in terms of Bagehot's practice, but it will produce benefits in terms of Hankey's principle. It will discourage people from paying more than is reasonable for assets on the belief that they come equipped with an insurance policy (the promise of a central bank rescue) that has been underwritten by taxpayers. The Republicans who nearly derailed the Treasury's Troubled Assets Relief Program in September played a similar role.

A final problem is that there are limits to how accountable a central bank can be. Everyone is always hollering for clear rules and transparency. But a dirty secret of regulation is that it frequently influences conduct most effectively when it is capricious and opaque. Any regulatory system will reveal its vulnerabilities over long use. If it addresses economic problems in a predictable way, savvy investors will find a way to "game" that predictability. You can draw an analogy with antidepressant drugs. There is no permanent right match of medication for a depressive. Antidepressants work only until the mind (or is it the brain?) finds a way around them, at which point a new, unfamiliar drug must be substituted. In the same way, no matter how good the content of a regulatory regime, it must change periodically if big market players are to be kept from profiting off it.

As Bagehot outlined his system, he was conscious that the practical realities of banking required him to heap paradox upon paradox. There is a hint of both Andrew Jackson and Thomas Aquinas in the way he referred to central banking as an "unnatural" thing in its very conception. "The business of banking ought to be simple," he wrote. "If it is *hard* it is *wrong*." If it is hard, the banker is either delegating poorly or has entangled his institution in complex transactions where it has no business. According to Bagehot, "Adventure is the life of commerce, but caution, I had almost said timidity, is the life of banking."

Centralizing a society's cash reserves is complicated, reckless, and artificial:

> A republic with many competitors of a size or sizes suitable to the business, is the constitution of every trade if left to itself, and of banking as much as any other. A monarchy in any trade is a sign of some anomalous advantage, and of some intervention from without. . . . The natural system of banking is that of many banks keeping their own cash reserve, with the penalty of failure before them if they neglect it.

In his ideas of company size, Bagehot harkened back to the 18th century rather than ahead to our own. To modern eyes, Bagehot is, as a factual matter, simply wrong. The natural tendency under free-market conditions is towards consolidation, and even monopoly. If you want small firms, you must protect them through government—whether this means Teddy Roosevelt-ian trust-busting, French-style subsidies to tobacconists, the EU's hounding of Microsoft, or

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the NIMBY anti-Wal-Mart campaigns aimed at preserving Mom-and-Pop stores. Bagehot sometimes contradicted himself on this point, noting also that "a large bank always tends to become larger, and a small one tends to become smaller," but his application of the word *unnatural* to a large central bank was frequent and must be taken as his settled view. It is curious that Bagehot, a contemporary of Marx, came to the opposite (and false) conclusion about how firms evolve.

Where Bagehot would agree with Marx is in his belief that there is something predictably destabilizing about modern economies. You don't need banks to have a precarious economy, or one liable to speculation—Bagehot noted that there were no banks, as we would understand them, in 1720, at the time of the South Sea Bubble and the Mississippi Scheme. But modern banking is precarious by design. "In exact proportion to the power of this system is its delicacy," he wrote. "I should hardly say too much if I said its danger." The power, delicacy, and danger all have the same source. In fact they are just different names for the same thing: leverage.

The interior of the Bank of England in the 1870s

At the very opening of the book, Bagehot illustrates with exquisite simplicity how, at least in a boom economy, traders on margin can "harass and press upon, if they do not eradicate, the old capitalist." The old capitalist in question is the poor sap who believes all this stuff about neither-a-borrower-nor-a-lender-be and is foolish enough to be using his own cash:

> If a merchant have £50,000 all his own, to gain 10 per cent on it he must make £5,000 a year, and must charge for his goods accordingly; but if another has only £10,000, and borrows £40,000 by discounts (no extreme instance in our modern trade), he has the same capital of £50,000 to use, and can sell much cheaper. If the rate at which he borrows be 5 per cent, he will have to pay £2,000 a year; and if, like the old trader, he make £5,000 a year, he will still, after paying his interest, obtain £3,000 a year, or 30 per cent, on his own £10,000. As most merchants are content with much less than 30 per cent, he will be able, if he wishes, to forego some of that profit, lower the price of the commodity, and drive the old-fashioned trader—the man who trades on his own capital—out of the market.

Later, Bagehot showed that this need for leverage is no different for those selling money than it is for those selling dry goods. The banker can no more choose not to lend than the merchant can choose not to borrow:

> The bill-broker has, in one shape or other, to pay interest on every sixpence left with him, and that constant habit of giving interest has this grave consequence: the bill-broker cannot afford to keep much money unemployed. He has become a banker owing large sums which he may be called on to repay, but he cannot hold as much as an ordinary banker, or nearly as much, of such sums in cash, because the loss of interest would ruin him.

In finance, once you *can* have leverage, you *must* have leverage. Once you have some leverage, getting more of it than your competitors is a matter of survival. And when governments and central banks debate whether to loosen or tighten up money, they face a constant clamor from the financial world to permit more leverage still. That is why, even in democracies, the instruments of monetary policy tend to be kept far from the influence of voters, and even hidden from view. Otherwise, credit tends to spiral. Bubbles result.

Nothing could be more foolish than to assume that this process of spiraling speculation is unleashed by "greed," unless by *greed* you mean human nature. Credit spirals are a darker aspect of the world Adam Smith described in *The Wealth of Nations* and Bernard de Mandeville did in the *Fable of the Bees*. Just as society can be improved by the uncoordinated action of the selfishly motivated, an economy can collapse for reasons having nothing to do with anybody's cupidity.

We should be moral in the way we think about money, but a credit system tends to make a mess of moral accounting. Bagehot described London's financial district as "a sort of standing broker between quiet saving districts of the country and the active employing districts." Decent, puritanical Suffolk farmers want to put their money in a safe place; Lancashire entrepreneurs want money to put to work. Thanks to London bankers, both can follow their wishes and make a profit in the process. We have an idea that the Suffolk dairyman is the "moral" party here (he's saving) and the Lancashire speculator the "immoral" one (he's gambling). But, once a banking system intervenes, they are *both* gambling and they are *both* saving. In good times you are welcome to mouth the folkloric cliché that holds farmers to be better people than financiers. When depression looms, you had better realize that the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

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Many Americans who have wound up underwater on their houses and maxed out on their credit cards are greedy, climbing, brand-intoxicated, materialistic shopaholics who thought the world owed them a living. But just as many of them are not. They are trapped, as surely as financial institutions are, in a system based on wild borrowing. Participation in this system is not exactly required, but it is not exactly optional, either. One's quality of life is determined not just by one's purchasing power but also by one's relative economic standing. Chagrin at seeing one's neighbors get richer faster may be a sign of bad character, but do not for a minute assume there is nothing to feel chagrin about! When it comes to the very goods people deem most essential—the proper mate; the schooling of one's children; the size, location, elegance, and comfort of one's house—relative standing is more important than absolute wealth.

Those who kept their money in savings banks in the 1990s lost out to those who did things we are supposed to disapprove of, like "spending money they didn't have," borrowing profligately to invest in stocks and even bonds, which appreciated at an average of 15 percent a year over the decade. Among rich people, how one entered the present decade had more to do with how one had done in the stock market than with how one had done in the labor market. Is that just? Of course it's not! It's easy to see now. But while the boom was going on there was all sorts of rationalizing about why it was okay that the social hierarchy should be reordered through stock and housing speculation. One line of argument was that people who did not have a ton of money in stocks, as well as those who rented rather than bought the houses they lived in, were foolish. This line of argument peaked at the turn of the decade, when Americans elected a president who had argued that the public was foolish for not launching its retirement savings onto the open seas of the stock market.

Bagehot saw that a speculative mania eventually sweeps up everyone in its path. "Every great crisis reveals the excessive speculations of many houses which no one before suspected," he wrote, "and which commonly indeed had not begun or had not carried very far those speculations, till they were tempted by the daily rise of price and the surrounding fever." Avaricious people get hurt, but it is in the nature of crashes that they are not the ones who get hurt most. A tragic figure present in almost every historic account of speculation and collapse in history is the person who believed, year after year, that the boom was an illusion, and held himself aloof until, at the very last minute, whether out of self-doubt or deference to the opinions of his fellow man, he entered the fray and was (having bought at the top, rather than the bottom, of the market) wiped out. What a wicked irony! His punishment is as much for his long and wise forbearance as for his momentary weakness.

So the "cultural contradictions of capitalism" run deeper than we thought. The classic idea, as laid out in their different ways by the economist Joseph Schumpeter and the sociologist Daniel Bell, is that capitalism rewards diligence; diligence produces wealth; wealth begets idleness; and idleness undermines capitalism. But when, as now, push comes to shove, we can ask whether there is really anything particularly capitalist about the virtues of diligence and self-restraint. The *real* capitalist virtues appear to be optimism and luck. From a central-banking perspective, the cultural contradictions are not results of capitalism but elements of it.

The problem with central banking is that it reacts to a system that has been mismanaged by rewarding the managers. That is why objections to central banking, although they can come from the right (Ron Paul, Jim Bunning) or the left (Barney Frank, William Greider), tend to be populist. Bagehot was no populist. He was comfortable with the idea that what some people think should be more important than what other people think:

> Almost all directors who bring special information labor under a suspicion of interest; they can only have acquired that information in present business, and such business may very possibly be affected for good or evil by the policy of the Bank. But you must not on this account seal up the Bank hermetically against living information.

Although he would surely fault Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson for many things, the criticism most often heard at present—that Paulson is too close to former colleagues on Wall Street, where he worked for years as CEO of Goldman Sachs—would strike Bagehot as misplaced.

Because it is on Wall Street, alas, that "the state of credit" is to be determined:

> The state of credit at any particular time is a matter of fact only to be ascertained like other matters of fact; it can only be known by trial and inquiry. And in the same way, nothing but experience can tell us what amount of "reserve" will create a diffused confidence.

To be blunt, credit is successfully reestablished when financial elites say, "When." *Credit* is close to a synonym for the mood of the ruling class. To say an economy is based on credit is to say it is based on animal mysteries. Glamour, prestige, élan, sprezzatura, cutting a figure . . . that is what the economy is made of. It is a rather terrifying thought. Viewed as Bagehot viewed it, from the perspective of a central bank in a crisis, an advanced economy looks an awful lot like a primitive economy. ♦

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The Other American Auto Industry

Plenty of car makers make a go of it in this country—they're just non-union and not headquartered in Detroit.

By Fred Barnes

West Point, Georgia

Drew Ferguson IV is a 42-year-old dentist whose family has lived in this town, population 3,300, "since God put us here." To be precise, the family arrived eight generations ago. Ferguson went off to the University of Georgia, then on to dental school, after which he came back to West Point. He and his wife, whom he met in college, have four kids. A year ago, Ferguson was elected mayor. "There's a reason I live in West Point," he says. "I love it. There's a sense of place here." No doubt, but West Point is located in what might also be considered the middle of nowhere. It's pinched between I-85 and the Alabama border. Atlanta is a good hour's drive away.

West Point today isn't the same town Ferguson grew up in. Textile company executives used to live here. But when the textile industry collapsed in the 1980s, the victim of foreign competition, they moved away. Thousands of jobs were lost. A few small technology firms took up some of the slack. But the high-tech bust of the late 1990s proved to be another job killer. "We survived without a federal bailout," Ferguson says sarcastically. Now, while much of America wallows in the gloom of a recession, there's great joy in West Point. "West Point will have more economic growth in the next 24 months than anywhere else in the country," Ferguson boasts. And he may be right.

KIA has come to town. The Korean automobile manufacturer is building a huge assembly plant, which will employ 2,900 workers when it begins turning out cars a year from now. KIA suppliers will employ thousands more nearby. When KIA accepted applications last winter—only online, not in person—43,000 people applied. Just last week, a 2.5-mile, four-lane road that runs along the 2,200-acre plant site was completed. Naturally it's called KIA Parkway. A Korean barbecue restaurant opened a year ago, as Koreans began moving into West Point. It was formerly a Pizza Hut.

KIA donated one of its cars to Georgia governor Sonny Perdue, who is said to drive it occasionally. Ferguson drives a KIA Sorento. "I had to buy mine," he says. In the election last year, Ferguson ousted Billy Head, who is 30 years older and was a two-term incumbent. Ferguson says the voters in West Point "were ready to take a new direction. We have a chance to completely reinvent this town. For an old textile town, we've really done pretty well." Ferguson recently hired a second dentist to join his practice.

West Point mayor Drew Ferguson

West Point has entered the auto industry's alternative universe. Foreign car manufacturers, the so-called transplants, have been setting up shop in the South for a quarter century now, starting with the plant that Nissan opened in Smyrna, Tennessee, in 1983. It's still operating. Nissan added a second plant in Canton, Mississippi, in 2003. Two years ago, Nissan moved its American headquarters from southern California to Cool Springs, Tennessee, just south of Nashville.

The auto production numbers in the South are staggering. A dozen years ago, Alabama produced zero cars. Now it turns out 750,000 annually at Mercedes, Honda, and Hyundai plants. Three years after Mercedes opened

PHOTOS, THE WEEKLY STANDARD

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

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its SUV factory near Tuscaloosa in 1996, it doubled the size and output. A Honda plant halfway between Birmingham and Atlanta went on line in 2001, and the next year the company spent $450 million to expand it, adding 2,000 more workers.

The southern auto industry mocks Detroit. The transplants make money and aren't asking for help from Washington. The recession has curtailed car sales temporarily, causing the transplants to slow production. But they are expected to expand again once the economy recovers. Volkswagen is currently building a plant outside of Chattanooga, which will produce 150,000 cars a year. But VW, with ambitious plans to increase its American sales, obtained an environmental permit that allows it to make 512,000 autos at the site. Volkswagen, by the way, has moved its main American office from Auburn Hills, Michigan, to Herndon, Virginia.

Embarrassed by the success of the foreigners, the Big 3 carmakers and the United Auto Workers (UAW) claim the tax and other "incentives" the transplants get from state and local governments in the South are no different from the subsidies they're seeking in Washington. But that's not quite true. "There's a big difference between a subsidy and an incentive," says Michael Randle, president of Southern Business and Development and an expert on the southern auto industry. "A subsidy pays to keep jobs. An incentive pays to bring them. If you're paying to keep them, it means somebody wants to leave."

Southern officials don't apologize for luring foreign companies, nor should they. "The distinction between foreign and domestic cars is totally gone now," Democratic governor Phil Bredesen of Tennessee told me. "Most Volkswagens are just as American as a Chevy. They're built here. They're built by Americans. The management at the [Chattanooga] plant is largely American. They're not bringing in parts from Germany." The plant manager happens to be a Texan named Don Johnson.

It's no longer politically risky for a governor to offer transplants costly incentives. Alabama's Democratic governor Jim Folsom Jr. was criticized for the $250 million package the state gave Mercedes, and the issue contributed to his defeat in the 1994 election. But when Bredesen and other Tennessee officials, including Republican senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker, attracted VW with $577 million in tax breaks and other enticements, they drew cheers.

Government payouts aren't the only inducement to automakers or even the most important one. There's also the attraction of a pro-business political community, relatively cheap labor, inexpensive or free land, lower cost of living and of doing business, warm climate, and the big one that the auto companies are wary of talking about—no UAW.

The southern auto belt from South Carolina to Texas, home to eight German, Japanese, or Korean plants (plus three more under construction), is right-to-work country. In these states, workers can't be compelled to join a union or pay dues, and not many are inclined to sign a union card anyway. The result: The UAW has failed miserably to organize workers. No Mercedes, VW, Honda, Toyota, Hyundai (KIA's parent), BMW, or Nissan plant in the South is unionized.

There's a simple explanation. It's what I call the progressive anti-unionism of the transplants. It consists of one factor: They pay well. Workers not only make far

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more than the prevailing wage in the rural areas where most plants are located but also considerably more than every state's average wage. With overtime, they can earn $70,000 or more a year at some plants. Average pay and benefits: roughly $45 an hour.

Unlike the timid auto executives, politicians in the right-to-work states are quite candid in crediting the enormous appeal of their non-union status. "If you don't have right-to-work laws, you end up like those guys [the Big 3] are today" in Detroit, Corker says. "Right to work," says another top state official, "is a huge issue."

"We don't have a culture that values union organizing," says Haley Barbour, the Republican governor of Mississippi who persuaded Toyota to locate a Prius plant in Blue Springs in northern Mississippi. "Our workers like overtime and pay for performance. They feel like they get a better deal without the union."

The UAW, of course, is partly responsible for lofty non-union wages, though the threat of a successful UAW organizing drive is remote. A union workforce doesn't fit the business model pursued by the transplants. They dislike inflexible union work rules, grievances, an adversarial relationship between management and labor, indeed any intermediary between plant managers and workers at all. And they especially hate strikes.

Michigan, though a union state, made an aggressive bid for the Volkswagen plant that wound up in Tennessee. It was one of three finalists. But when a VW site selection team made its final visit in May, a UAW local in Michigan was striking against a Big 3 supplier. "Fear of the UAW probably drove the final decision," a local business leader told the *Detroit Free Press*.

In truth, the transplants don't have much to worry about from organized labor. The UAW has been able to force only three elections at the foreign-owned plants. The union lost overwhelmingly at Nissan's Tennessee plant in 1989, failed in another election there, and lost at the Mercedes plant in Alabama. The UAW might fare better if "card check" is approved by Congress next year, allowing organizers to succeed without the need to win a secret ballot election. But the transplants should still have little trouble thwarting UAW organizers.

'Why would a worker in Alabama or Texas making far and away the best wages he ever could want to join the UAW? The UAW has no story to tell these people that makes any sense.'

– Richard Wyatt, Washington labor attorney

The UAW's problem is that it has little to offer. High pay? The workers have that. "If you're making $50 an hour, what do you need a union for?" says Randle. Job security? Workers tend to rate a successful company as a better security bet than a union whose members are losing jobs by the tens of thousands. A voice on the assembly line? Transplant workers have that, just not through a third-party like the UAW.

So the UAW is left with a handful of weak arguments about on-the-job accidents, overworked employees, and sweatshop conditions. "Why would a worker in Alabama or Texas making far and away the best wages he ever could want to join the UAW?" says Washington attorney Richard Wyatt, who specializes in labor issues. "The UAW has no story to tell these people that makes any sense."

In courting transplants, southern states have another great advantage besides right-to-work laws and lucrative incentive packages. They try harder because their need—especially to raise the South's standard of living—has been greater. They are better at beckoning business because they've been doing it for decades, first to attract textiles and furniture, now autos. They treat campaigns to capture transplants like military exercises. Georgia's plan to win over KIA was dubbed Project Pine Tree. Also, nearly all elected officials, Republicans and Democrats, are favorable to business. The efforts are bipartisan.

And they put far more time and ingenuity into charming foreign auto chiefs. When Tennessee officials negotiated with Nissan over shifting its headquarters to Nashville, they learned the wife of the top Nissan executive in the United States was a fancier of African violets. So they arranged to have a new type of the flower named after her. To meet with KIA's chief executive in West Point, Georgia officials replaced their Fords with a fleet of rented KIAs to drive around the proposed plant site.

Since Tennessee's Nissan breakthrough in 1983, states in the southern auto corridor have been willing to up the ante to attract the transplants. Nissan got $66 million in incentives. Two years later, Toyota accepted $125 million to put a plant near Lexington, Kentucky. That included $35 million for buying and preparing the

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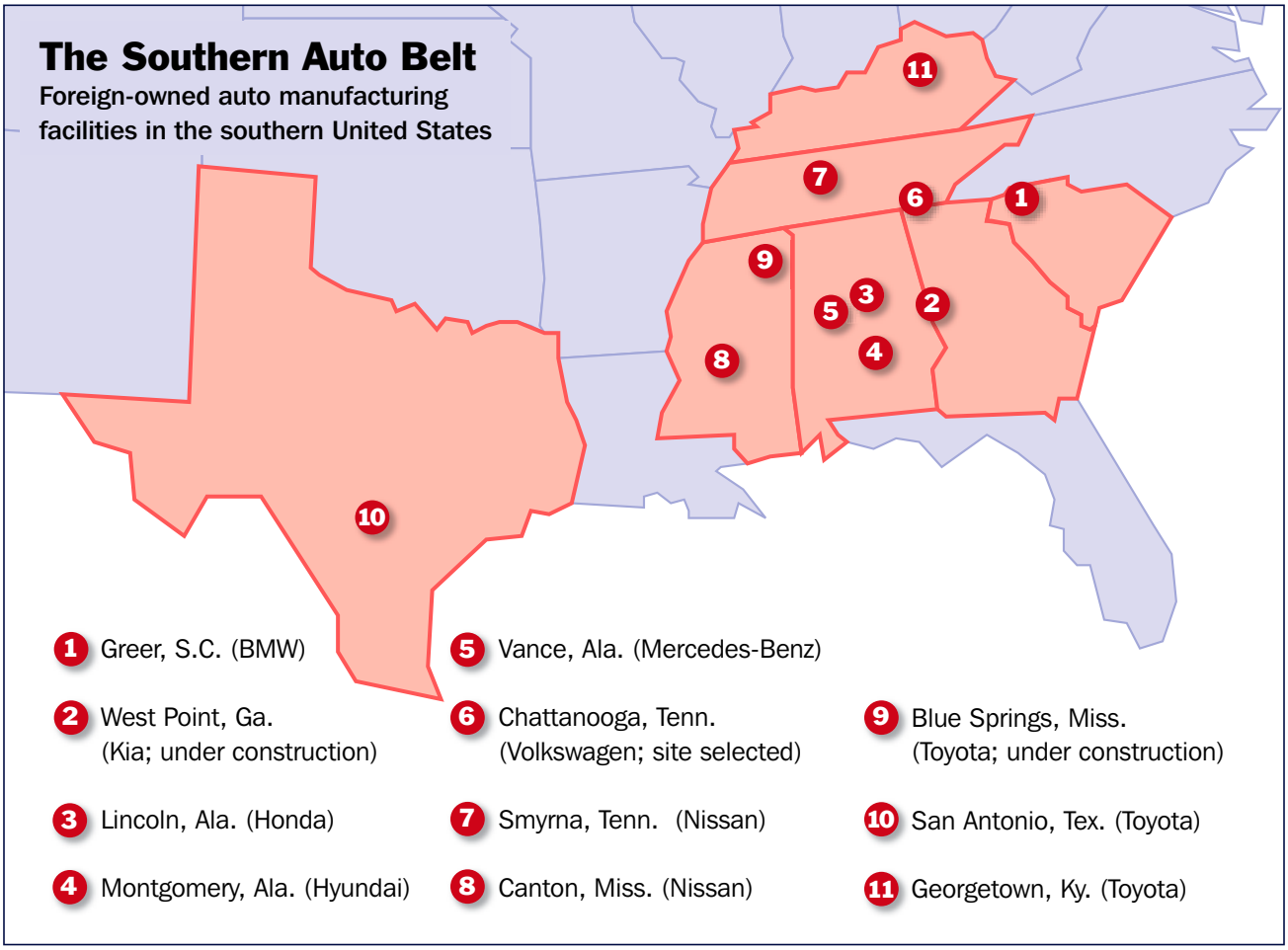

site. The latest was Tennessee's $577 million package for VW this year.

So far, these investments have paid off handsomely. Michael Randle points to the case of Alabama, which has delivered $1.2 billion in incentives to four automakers. The companies, in turn, have spent $20 billion in salaries alone to their employees. "If Warren Buffett took $1.2 billion and turned it into $20 billion in 10 years, he'd be called a genius."

Randle argues that the "sum of the southern auto industry is so much greater than its parts." The auto plants have a multiplier effect on local economies. They usually hire younger workers who might not be able to buy a home until their 40s if they worked at Wal-Mart. "With these [auto] jobs, they buy a house at 28 or 29." At least that's Randle's theory.

Drew Ferguson is a believer. He initially got an inkling that KIA was coming from his father, Drew Ferguson III, a banker in West Point who heads the town's economic development commission. "Son, I've got some good news," he said several years ago. "But I can't tell you." The news was KIA's interest in West Point. Georgia officials, it turned out, had tried in vain to sell KIA on a fully developed site outside Savannah. But a member of KIA's site selection team had picked out the West Point site as he drove between Atlanta and Montgomery, Alabama, home of a Hyundai plant.

Once KIA announced its decision, excitement in West Point bubbled over. But there was a problem with the site. It was divided among 35 separate landowners. The elder Ferguson had the job of buying out all of them. It took him just 35 days. The town itself has put $80 million into the KIA project.

The mayor talked optimistically last week about West Point's future as he drove me around the town and down the new four-lane parkway past the half-built plant. "This community was able to survive when the textile industry went away," he told me. "At the height of the tech boom, we had 2,000 jobs, but we lost a lot of those. Now we have a remarkable opportunity to turn this old textile town into the largest economic development in Georgia's history." ♦

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Afghan National Police officers remove belongings from their station in Shamal District, Khost Province, which was destroyed in a suicide bombing on November 21.

RAFAL GERSZAK

Policing Afghanistan

Too few good men and too many bad ones make for a grueling, uphill struggle

By Ann Marlowe

Khost and Kandahar Provinces

Like most of the rest of Khost Province in eastern Afghanistan, Gorbuz District is a floodplain where wheat, corn, and other crops are grown by ancient methods in small plots running up to the base of 9,000-foot mountains. Stone or mudbrick-walled *qalats*—fortified family compounds of half an acre or an acre—dot the countryside, often built on elevated ground.

Some *qalats* have a de Chirico aspect, precise brown rectangles against a big, brilliant blue sky. Others cluster in villages that, like Italian hill towns, take on the appearance of a single walled compound.

Over the course of the last two years, a few jarring notes have intruded into this timeless landscape: a smoothly paved road, a huge solar-powered street light in the bazaar, a satellite dish on the district center complex. Nearly all of these are the work of the U.S. Army, which is attempting to bring Gorbuz and the rest of Khost from the Middle Ages to modernity. Until this year, Gorbuz had no schools; now its 80,000 people have 14.

The infrastructure projects are intended to improve the lives of ordinary Afghans and motivate them to rally behind

Ann Marlowe is a New York writer who just finished her fourth embed in Khost Province and her eleventh trip to Afghanistan.

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their national government. People are voting with their feet, as refugees return from Pakistan. Firm numbers are hard to come by in Afghanistan, but the best there are—those provided by U.S. forces—suggest that Gorbuz had a population of 66,000 in 2007. Now, people are starting to find conditions here better than in Pakistan's neighboring Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

But while most Afghans embrace at least the tangible benefits of modernization, the small opposition remains violent. And for the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Gorbuz and much of the rest of Khost, this apparently tranquil, age-old landscape is a minefield.

Marksmanship practice in Gorbuz District, as MPs from Fort Stewart, Ga., look on.

RICHARD T. KNIGHTLY

Between March 21, when the Afghan year began, and mid-November, five IEDs exploded in Gorbuz, two of them close calls for their target, the chief of police, Bismallah, whose car was destroyed in one attack. Of Khost's approximately 1,200 cops, 89 have been killed by IEDs so far this year.

Gorbuz District is authorized to pay 64 cops, and 45 were on active duty when I visited in March, but by late October only 30 were working. Captain Rick Knightly, quietly competent, leads the 27 soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division and U.S. Military Police who mentor the police at Gorbuz District Center. He explained, "We train them at least three times a week on the top 20 skills they have to learn and do joint operations with them."

Asked whether the training has improved the performance of his force, the police chief smiled. Bismallah, a compact, wizened man, said, "There is no improvement in my police quality, because they are quitting. If this does not change, I will be alone here with Captain Knightly."

In addition to the obvious hazards of the job, the police are paid a pittance. Their basic pay has been $100 a month, and some of Bismallah's men have quit to join the Afghan Border Police, which pays $150, or one of two privately contracted security forces manning towers on U.S. bases, the Afghan Security Guards and the Khost Protection Force. ("They're not allowed to smoke hash," one of the U.S. soldiers said by way of explaining their superior caliber. Smoking hashish and marijuana is legal in Afghanistan and tolerated in the police.)

In the Afghan Security Guards, squad leaders make $300 a month—as much as Chief Bismallah, a 26-year veteran of the police force who speaks not only his native Pashtu but also Dari and English. Security guard supervisors make $400 a month—as much as Colonel Abdul Qayoum, who commands the 1,200-man police force for all of Khost Province.

While the insurgents cannot directly engage either the American Army or the Afghan Army and increasingly keeps its distance from the police, they kill with IEDs. The police are the most vulnerable of the security forces; unlike the U.S. and Afghan armies, the police have no uparmored Humvees. They drive around in U.S.-issued Ford Ranger pickup trucks that aren't even bulletproof.

Again, the casualty numbers tell the story. As of mid-November, only 88 U.S. troops had been killed in action in all of Afghanistan this year, but 464 Afghan soldiers had been slain and a whopping 1,215 police. That last is an increase of 47 percent over the 2007 total. Add to that an estimated 2,600 police wounded or missing in action so far this year. Given a total Afghan National Police force of 77,000, that means 1 out of 20 cops was killed or wounded in 2008. By way of comparison, just 181 cops were killed in the line of duty in the United States in 2007, and our population is 10 to 12 times larger than Afghanistan's. If

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the United States were as dangerous for police as Afghanistan, we would have lost at least 12,000 cops this year.

The IED threat is increasing all over Khost. In 2007, 69 IEDs exploded in the province and 59 were turned in. This year between April and October, just six months, 110 exploded and 104 were turned in.

Before U.S. soldiers can go home, Afghans have to be able to manage their own security. The Afghan National Army, which we've been training since 2002, has made good progress. Currently 41 of its 69 battalions (of 600 men) have met what U.S. trainers call Capability Milestone One, meaning that they are "capable of independent planning, execution, and sustainment of counterinsurgency operations at the battalion level," and of those, 21 have also reached Capability Milestone Two, and thus can lead such operations. The Afghan National Army has not lost an engagement with insurgents since April 2007.

The Afghan National Police have a much sadder story, which is changing only slowly. First, Afghanistan doesn't have enough cops to do the job. New York City alone has almost 38,000 police officers serving a densely packed population of 8.3 million. Afghanistan's 77,000 cops serve a nation of 25 to 31 million people, most of them in villages scattered across one of the most mountainous countries in the world.

Some improvements are underway. A pay raise has just been announced for December 22: $20 for every cop in the country, plus combat pay of $2 a day for those in dangerous districts (which soldiers already receive). But there is no magic cure for IEDs.

A U.S.-designed reform of the police is slowly percolating through the country, too slowly to save the cops in frontline provinces like Khost. The chief instrument of reform is a program called Focused District Development, which pulls a district's police out and sends them to a regional center for eight weeks of training by Afghan instructors alongside U.S. mentors. This has reached only 42 of a planned 172 districts to date. None of the districts that have been through the program has yet been certified at Capability Milestone One, though a few are expected to reach that level in the coming months.

Focused District Development is manpower-intensive. Mentoring teams of 12 to 18 trainers stay with units of around 100 to 120 police after they return home, following their progress more and more loosely as time goes on until the cops reach Capability Milestone One. Corrupt police are weeded out, illiterate police—nearly all the patrolmen and some of the NCOs—are offered basic reading classes, and all police (in theory) are issued body armor with plates, Kevlar helmets, up-to-date weapons, radios, and the same boots U.S. soldiers wear.

ANN MARLOWE

Gorbuz police chief Bismallah and his car, wrecked by an IED.

Both U.S. commanders and Afghan officials have a say in selecting districts to participate, but selection is heavily weighted toward the most dangerous areas. Forty of the first 42 districts to go through the program were among the country's worst.

The slow progress of the Afghan National Police is not for want of money. The United States designated $1 billion in 2006 and $2.5 billion in 2007 for training and equipping the police, much of which is being disbursed this year. In 2008, Congress budgeted $800 million for the police, which will be spent mainly in 2009. A similar sum is budgeted for 2009, to be spent in 2010.

Major General Robert W. Cone, the head of U.S. training for the Afghan National Police, explained the big picture to me on November 8, our second interview this year.

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"I'm building a $60 million training center in Maidan Wardak that will be capable of training 2,000 men at a time," he said, "but I don't have enough training teams to do the job as quickly as it needs to be done. I've only got 103 mentor teams." Technically, Cone is short 2,300 trainers. All of the men he has on the job have been shifted from training the Afghan Army or picked up nearly one by one from various maneuver units.

ISAF, the NATO-led security and development mission in Afghanistan, is in charge of two districts whose police are currently going through the training program, and it will assume responsibility for another three in January. Cone would like to see NATO contribute more to the effort. "Germany has given us one team," he says. "We did a deal with the Dutch and they came up with two teams. The Canadians and British contributed five teams each. But 90 to 95 percent of the resources for police reform have come from the United States."

A police officer searches a house for weapons and explosives in the Spera District, Khost Province.

Cone acknowledges that the police are doing the job of an army at war, while equipped for keeping a peace that has yet to arrive. "Shape, clear, hold, build—that's the doctrine," Cone says. "But we have a lot of police in areas that need clearing."

The police in Gorbuz are so intimidated by insurgent IED attacks that they use their Ford Ranger trucks and wear their uniforms only when accompanying U.S. forces. Otherwise they borrow civilian cars and wear civilian clothes. This isn't unusual in Khost. But at least Bismallah insists that his men patrol their district. In some districts, the police stay alive by shirking active patrolling.

"Bismallah is the best of the six police chiefs I mentor," says First Lieutenant Jeffrey Kelley, chief of the Provincial Mentorship Team for half of Khost's 12 districts. "Bismallah's the most active, and he cares about his soldiers. None of the other five chiefs I deal with go out on patrol with their men. One of them is illiterate."

Sergeant David McNeil of the 101st Airborne, who works out of the Mandozai District Center, comments, "The guys that are in their Rangers and out there doing stuff, it's not a question of if something will happen to them, but when."

When Major Bill Appel arrived in April to head the Provincial Mentoring Team for Khost, most of the provincial capital's police wore civilian clothes. Since Colonel Qayoum took over as police chief for the province in mid-August, more and more have followed his order to wear their uniforms, and Appel estimates that only 5-10 percent of the city cops are in civvies. But as a staff sergeant on Appel's team notes, "the further you get out from Khost City, the fewer men are wearing uniforms."

Obviously this doesn't increase local respect for the police, and it makes police more vulnerable to friendly fire. But it's hard to blame cops like Chief Bismallah for not pushing their men's luck. As Colonel Qayoum told me, the death benefit for police killed in the line of duty is just 75,000 afghanis, or $1,500. (The death benefit for soldiers is 250,000 afghanis, or $5,000.)

Captain Knightly's superior, Captain Terry Hilt, is a calm, classic midwesterner who commands Gorbuz and nearby Terzayi District. "The ANP here aren't issued helmets or body armor," says Hilt. "The American Army gives us armor for a reason. Two of our ANP who got shot might still be alive if they'd had body armor."

Appel explains, "The individual body armor vests they have will stop a 9mm, but that is not the weapon of choice in this country; it's an AK-47, and they don't have the armored plates which would protect them."

General Cone has an answer: "In order for me to give them the equipment, we need an end user agreement. If you don't have a list of what's supposed to be there, they're

PHOTOS BY RAFAL GERSZAK

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going to sell it. And as the steward of the American taxpayer's money, I won't accept that."

That's hard to explain to the family of a slain cop. "It's a valid concern," says Appel, "but it's not a reason not to equip them properly." And of course if the police in Khost were better paid, they wouldn't have an incentive to sell equipment. Perhaps the pay raise will do the trick.

The higher leadership of the Afghan National Police ranges from excellent to frightening. A former Khost chief, General Ayoub, was viewed by Americans who worked with him as a useless bureaucrat who rarely left his office; he was finally sent to a desk job in Kabul. But his replacement, after two and a half months on the job, had only managed to visit four of the province's districts. Colonel Qayoum insisted to me that all 12 are fully staffed, against all evidence to the contrary. There are rumors that Qayoum has tried to thwart the career of Khost's most outstanding police officer.

But Qayoum is an intelligent man, and his litany of complaints about the resources provided to the police is mostly well founded. He reeled off the issues: "We have no EOD [Explosive Ordnance Detonation] experts, no medics, not even any first aid kits, and no provision for maintenance of our equipment." They do have two EOD "experts," but they are working as regular cops because of the manpower shortage. Master Sergeant Richard Palasz says the police should have an EOD team in every district, given the magnitude of the threat from IEDs. "Our soldiers have a year and a half of training to become an EOD expert; the Afghans have three weeks."

Nor are the police equipped for the sorts of extended missions they find themselves undertaking with American forces. Because the Afghan National Police are the only force legally authorized to search Afghan homes, they must accompany the Afghan Army and coalition forces on any mission that involves entering *qalats*. Some missions involve trekking up steep mountains with 130 pounds of gear, food, and water—but the police in Khost have no backpacks. On a recent mission, Major Appel's team outfitted the police with kids' backpacks intended for army humanitarian assistance to schools, jury-rigging body bags to carry food and water.

Major Appel added that the police don't have flashlights or eye protection (ballistic glasses are mandatory for U.S. troops). "The men on my team chipped in, and we bought the 20 police on our mission sunglasses to protect their eyes against the dust that the helicopters stir up."

The Khost police are too few to patrol effectively, even in districts where they feel safe driving the Rangers and wearing their uniforms. Mandozai has just 19 cops to patrol 72 villages with a total of 120,000 people. Terzayi has 38 cops responsible for the security of 110,000 people living in 131 villages, some of them far off the paved road.

Even fewer men are available at any given time. Kelley explains, "When you count out the guys on leave, most of my district centers have 26 police. They work 12-hour shifts, so there are 13 men on duty." In reality, the Terzayi police only do independent patrols up to a few kilometers away from the district center, though they will accompany U.S. troops anywhere.

Police search and question a suspected insurgent in the Spera District, Khost Province.

It's hard to blame them. Recently a direct fire rocket attack from 900 yards away missed the entrance control point to the Terzayi District Center complex—home to the district's 38 police—by only 35 yards. On October 17, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the district center's front gate when he was challenged by a member of the Afghan Security Guard.

Two policemen, an uncle and his nephew, were shot in

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broad daylight in the bazaar on September 26, and another was killed while on leave. Just two were killed in 2007. Five Afghan Border Police were killed and two injured in Terzayi District on June 18, and four IEDs have exploded since April, when the 101st Airborne began its deployment here. Not surprisingly, six police in Terzayi have quit recently to go overseas. Terzayi men have a tradition of going to work in the Gulf states, where they earn three or more times police salaries.

The situation in Gorbuz and Terzayi is good compared with that in two extremely rugged districts of Khost, Qalandar and Musa Khel. Qalander has no Afghan National Police at all, "because they'd get killed if they went up there," as one U.S. soldier who has been helicoptered in to fight in the area comments. Their district center is in neighboring Musa Khel, where First Lieutenant Shane Oravsky, a recent West Point graduate, led a mission. Some of the police his unit encountered were wearing badges on their hats denoting allegiance to Haqqani, a terrorist leader operating from Pakistan. "The police didn't even know the name of their chief or sub-governor. No uniforms, nothing. Well actually, the only guy in uniform was a midget." (There's a family of midget cops in Musa Khel.)

Oravsky continued, "There are rumors the sub-governor up there has been handing out Afghan National Police trucks to the Taliban. The elders told us there are never any Taliban up there. We left, and that night the Taliban came in and captured 10 or 15 people and killed 5 or 10. I'd really like to get back up there."

And even in relatively safe districts, the threat of sudden death is never far. On November 20, a suicide bomber driving a truck packed with explosives detonated outside the Dowmanda District Center on the northern border of Khost with Paktia, killing two police doing guard duty and seven civilians, as well as wounding 16 and demolishing the district center complex and U.S. troops' quarters (with two Americans wounded).

Police carry an injured comrade to safety after an ambush, Shamal District, Khost Province.

RAFAL GERSZAK

Afghan cops do little that resembles police work in the United States. In Khost and the Pashtun belt generally there are almost no burglaries or robberies, perhaps because most people live in McFortresses. In the only burglary I heard about in Gorbuz, a tractor was taken from the yard of a property that had high boundary walls on only three sides—laughable negligence, in the view of locals. But there is an astonishing number of murders for a small, homogenous rural population.

Gorbuz had three murders between March 21 and mid-November, two arising from land disputes, one from "wife stealing." None of the culprits was caught; all jumped the porous border and disappeared into Pakistan. In the same period, Terzai had two murders, prompted by land disputes. In Mandozai, a small district of 120,000 people, October's crime roster included five murders over land disputes, two carjackings, and a field-burning. That's 10 murders in six months in districts totaling 310,000 people. On an annualized basis these Khost districts have a murder rate equivalent to that of New York City.

"There have been five murders in three weeks just in the little village right outside Forward Operating Base Salerno," one of Appel's colleagues said. A professor at Khost's new university and his 11-year-old son were gunned down in their car, two 14-year-old high school boys were strangled and left with a note stating that they were killed in retaliation for a relative's working at Salerno, and one of Appel's translators was shot on his way home from work. This last murder might have been punishment for the man's working for the Americans, or it could have reflected resentment

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over business: Translators have influence—too much influence, most soldiers think—on the choice of contractors.

Murders in Khost used to occur between tribes, but now they occur within families, with brothers killing brothers, and cousins cousins. It starts with land or money and then becomes a matter of saving face. This doesn't seem to concern the local mullahs, who are preoccupied with building as many mosques as possible in their villages.

Afghan corruption is pervasive. It frustrates even some well-intentioned, seemingly blameless American reforms. New rules mandate written placement exams to determine who is qualified to be a police officer, an NCO, or a regular patrolman. But it's widely known that many men have to pay bribes to get their results. Without the results, you can't get paid. Lieutenant Kelley says, "I've seen my second-best chief fight to retain his job. Some of the men who are demoted from officer to NCO are so ashamed that they quit the force."

There are also strong suggestions that some high scores stem from bribes. "There's a personnel officer in Terzayi who cannot read and write and a new police chief I have not met who is also illiterate," Kelley says. And the new system slots people according to literacy, but makes no provision for promotion from within the ranks. Says Palasz, "If you are illiterate and you join as a patrolman, you retire as a patrolman 20 years later."

Regional Command South is the most dangerous part of Afghanistan, and it was an early priority to have police from four of its six provinces—Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan—go through the Focused District Development program. About 1,600 officers from this region have completed the training, out of about 10,000. Here, too, Afghan National Police casualties have been high this year: 664 killed and 1,017 wounded from January through mid-November.

The police forces in Kandahar that have been through U.S. training are a notch ahead of those in Khost, but nothing is easy in Afghanistan, and programs that should function smoothly rarely do. Ten of the 13 police substations in the city of Kandahar have gone through the program, as have three of the province's other 13 districts. But in Kandahar city's most dangerous subdistrict, the police who have gone through Focused District Development still have no plates for their body armor, no helmets, and woefully inadequate equipment and clothing.

Kandahar's Police Subdistrict Nine covers a new community of around 89,000—a result of the building boom taking place all over Afghanistan—where neighbors don't know or trust each other. As a result, it has become a magnet for IEDs. Ninety percent of the IEDs found or detonated in Kandahar are here, 23 of them logged between March 21 and mid-November. One cop out of the subdistrict's 63 has been killed and two wounded in the last couple of months.

Some of the cops at Subdistrict Nine are wearing black Chinese knock-off boots that are falling apart just five months after issue. The boots they'd been issued during training were shot by the end of the eight-week program, according to Major Ryan Leigh, who commands the 13-man team training Kandahar's Subdistricts Six, Eight, and Nine. Even the replacement boots came mainly in size 12, while most of the men were size 8 or 9. Subdistrict Nine was issued a grand total of 50 pairs of winter socks, though the rule is supposedly two pairs per cop, not exactly a lavish number in a place without running water. Police have only one uniform each, which they wash weekly. And they live in unheated quarters in an area where temperatures dip into the 40s or below at night for four or five months of the year.

Though the police are supposed to receive supplies through the Ministry of the Interior, there are always many slips twixt the cup and the lip. "We think the problem is in Provincial Headquarters. It's being investigated by a prosecutor," said Major Leigh.

Leigh's team (one lieutenant, a master sergeant, four lower-ranked sergeants, and six enlisted men who mentor Afghans in guard duty, weapons cleaning, and vehicle maintenance) is responsible for three police chiefs, three deputies, three logistics, operations, and personnel officers, and about 150 ordinary cops. The team is a remarkably dedicated and compassionate mix of career U.S. Army and National Guardsmen, and like Major Appel's team in Khost, they are protective of the miserably paid and equipped men they mentor.

"We are focusing on getting them their winter gear," Leigh continued. "Last year 3,500 boots were sent from Kabul for the city, and 1,500 arrived." The cops aren't issued flashlights—this is a country where there's no electrical grid, so most areas are pitch black at night—but Leigh's team found the money to buy one big Maglite for every six cops in their districts.

The police here are short of food as well as equipment. Food prices in Afghanistan have increased by 100-150 percent in the last six months, in step with world price levels. "Kandahar Province is running $6,000 a day in the red on food alone," says Lieutenant Engle. So the police don't get the rations of meat or heating oil they are supposed to receive.

"They may not get meat for a month, but they still want to be ANP," says Engle, a New York State National Guardsman who in civilian life is a seventh-grade teacher in Old Forge, New York. "When you see their patriotism, it's unreal. It's so great working with them, it's why I extended my tour by three months."

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Leigh and his men are unanimous in their praise for Subdistrict Nine. "This district would be at Capability Milestone One in three months or so if we could get the other half of the police" into the training program, said Leigh. Just half of the 62 police here graduated from Focused District Development in June. "The ones who have are very good about taking care of the new guys," Leigh explained. Six of the 62 cops are literate, and one speaks some English, which makes this one of the most educated police teams in the city of 600,000.

Leigh's 13 Americans train two other districts as well, and neither is a pretty picture. "District Six has no leadership. It's gone through four commanders. Unless they get a good new commander, they are 9 to 12 months from Capability Milestone One. District Eight borders on being self-sustaining, but the challenge is to get the leadership to do the administrative work they are supposed to do. It's the most prosperous district we mentor, and morale is high. But they're six to eight months from Capability Milestone One." In districts where the problems are worst, the tiny size of the mentor teams makes progress slow. "It's reactive mentoring," Leigh explains. "It should be one-on-one for the logistics, operations, and personnel officers."

In rural Kandahar Province, the situation is more difficult, with Taliban attacks frequent. Police regularly transfer to the safer city districts after completing Focused District Development.

Major Kevin J. Reilly of the New York State National Guard—in civilian life a Garden City, Long Island, cop—heads the team training the police in one hotspot about two hours from Kandahar city, Maiwand District. The 110 police under his supervision are responsible for the security of 50,000 Afghans living in a sprawling agricultural district roughly 40 kilometers by 50. "Out of the 110, maybe three or four can read and write," says Reilly. "This makes our job difficult, because they can't do lists. A lot of them can't count. What we train them in is 10 percent police work and 90 percent light infantry combat."

The accomplishments of the training program should be measured against the unpromising starting material. In Arghandab District, an agricultural area just over a mountain from Kandahar, a team from the New York National Guard was about to begin shepherding the cops through the Focused District Development program. The police chief showed up in civilian clothes for the meeting between the American team and the district elders and admitted that all of his 200 cops were illiterate with the exception of three NCOs. Four cops were killed by IEDs in Arghandab between March and November, and 13 died in a mysterious incident where a "spy" befriended some of the cops and invited them to his home. There, they were drugged—or took drugs—and their throats were slit.

"The police in this district are police during the day and Taliban at night," commented the commander from the elite Afghan National Civil Order Police, the best-equipped and trained police force in the country, who was about to bring his men to replace Arghandab's cops during their two month classroom training phase. He didn't have high expectations for the training program, saying, "The donkey is the same but the clothes are changed."

Especially in the south, drug use is a problem among police. General Nasarullah Zarifi is the Afghan police general heading the Provincial Training Center where cops from the four southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul go for eight weeks of formal instruction at the beginning of the Focused District Development process. He notes that on intake into the classes, 39 out of 372 cops tested positive for opiates, 98 for marijuana, and 16 failed their physicals. The policemen I saw at the Kandahar Police Mentoring Center looked robust and fit. One American mentor pointed out that the men are fed better at the center than before or after, and that they are "scared s—less" of General Zarifi, a stern disciplinarian. But when they return to their districts, no drug testing is done.

Administering the police mentoring program is harder in the Pashtun belt than it needs to be because all the forms that come down from the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul are written in Dari, while the language of Kandaharis is Pashtu. Both are official national languages, but historically the Ministry of the Interior has been a Dari-speaking stronghold staffed by Tajiks.

Typically, even in Pashtun provinces like Kandahar and Khost, the top brass and some district police chiefs speak Dari. But NCOs and below don't. So in many cases, NCOs who are barely literate in Pashtu have to struggle to fill out paperwork in a grammatically distinct language. (Luckily, many nouns, especially those dealing with abstract concepts, are common to both tongues, and they are written in the same script.) This also explains why there are no police medics for Kandahar Province: The only instructional course is given in Dari, which few cops understand.

Everyone involved in police mentoring, from General Cone on down, is well aware that the program is not a quick fix. Initial expectations were that the mentor teams would oversee districts for two to four months after their training, but the word is that it's likely to take 10 to 12 months for many districts to reach Capability Milestone One.

One mentor, himself a New York City detective, commented, "There are probably precincts in New York that aren't CM1-capable. We go to police academy for six months, and after that it takes three to five years for a New York cop to know what he's doing. And we're going to do it in an eight week academy and a year of mentoring here?" ♦

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When Books Were Great

Furrowing the American middlebrow

By Christine Rosen

The death of reading has been much in the news lately, and so Alex Beam's new book, a rollicking tour of the Great Books movement that flourished in the United States in the 1940s and '50s, is timely indeed. Beam, a columnist for the *Boston Globe*, is a beguiling guide. With fluid prose and (thank goodness) a sense of humor about the terrifying earnestness that often permeated the Great Books enterprise, he gives the movement the respect it deserves but does not avoid pointing out its excesses and missteps.

A Great Idea at the Time
The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books
by Alex Beam
Public Affairs, 256 pp., $24.95

We meet people like John Erskine, the grandfather of the Great Books movement and a "gentleman of the old school," as Beam describes him. Erskine believed a great book was one that "has meaning, and continues to have meaning, for a variety of people over a long period of time," and he was responsible for creating Columbia's core curriculum program in the 1910s, which introduced students to Thucydides, Herodotus, and Montaigne, among others, and a version of which is still part of the university's requirement for undergraduates.

Beam also offers an intriguing portrait of Robert Maynard Hutchins, the debonair Yale Law School dean who, after becoming president of the University of Chicago, introduced a Great Books seminar in the 1930s. The seminar, which eventually drew students such as future *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham and future critic Susan Sontag, engaged students in Socratic-style questioning about Plato, Aristotle, and other great authors of the Western canon, and drew nationwide attention for its novel approach to classic texts.

Mortimer J. Adler, 1947

GETTY IMAGES

Hutchins also brought his "Hobbit-like sidekick," Mortimer Adler, with him to Chicago. Adler, whose abrasiveness was matched only by his overweening ego—Beam calls him an "unholy pain in the neck"—was the Great Books program's slightly wacky, energetic force of intellectual hucksterism. Forever annoying his colleagues (when he was a graduate student at Columbia he once so infuriated John Dewey with his intemperate remarks that the normally mild-mannered Dewey stomped out of the room), he pursued the Great Books project with vaudevillian zeal for the rest of his life.

As Beam describes, the Great Books movement was part of a broader flowering of middlebrow culture in the 1950s, which included new popular literary magazines, the wildly successful Book-of-the-Month Club, and the sprawling, popular histories of Will and Ariel Durant. With the help and business acumen of advertising mogul William Benton—who bears the ignominious distinction of crafting slogans such as "Colgate toothpaste freshens your mouth!"—Hutchins and Adler convinced the University of Chicago and the financially ailing *Encyclopedia Britannica* to publish the massive Great Books of the Western World.

By the 1950s, approximately 3,000 Great Books discussion groups were meeting regularly throughout the coun-

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try, prompting the *Ladies' Home Journal* to declare that the movement was "spreading faster than Alcoholics Anonymous." The University of Chicago and Britannica hosted a gala launch of a "buckram-bound Founders' Edition" of the Great Books at the Waldorf-Astoria in 1952, and supporters did not stint in their praise of the achievement.

One speaker declared the project "the most significant publishing event since Dr. Johnson's dictionary."

As Beam notes, much of the success of the Great Books in the 1950s was the result not only of a flourishing middlebrow culture but also Britannica's frenzied advertising and sales campaign, a campaign that tacitly endorsed unscrupulous techniques by its own door-to-door salesmen. These peddlers of Plato often conned families into buying the behemoth set of Great Books with promises of school scholarships and free vacations. Britannica also "carpet-bombed magazines and newspapers" with ads that played on readers' intellectual insecurities.

"The ability to Discuss and Clarify Basic Ideas is vital to success. Doors open to the man who possesses this talent," reads a typical bit of copy.

Some of the best parts of *A Great Idea at the Time* are Beam's descriptions of Great Books' supporters' attempts to define just what was, in fact, a Great Book. The committee convened to decide which books should be included in Britannica's Great Books of the Western World soon found that identifying greatness was a little like Justice Potter Stewart's definition of pornography: They knew it when they saw it, but they didn't always agree on what it was. Beam describes amusing scenes of tweedy tension as the likes of Adler, Erskine, Hutchins, and Mark Van Doren haggled over which eminences of the Western canon should stay and which should go. "Molière will go out only over my bruised body!" Van Doren declared at one point.

As Beam notes, in an understatement, "When it comes to Great Books, no one is without an opinion."

The men behind the Great Books movement nurtured an ideal of these texts as a democratizing force; Adler once spoke of "universalizing liberal education for adults" through the reading of the canon and, indeed, his own lifelong passion for Great Books was fueled by his own reading of John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* as a young man. But the Noble Savage myth embraced by advocates was just that—a myth. Most Great Books devotees were not lonely plumbers longing to read Plutarch but older educated women, the wives of white-collar men.

The forces behind the movement, particularly Hutchins and Adler, failed to retain the influence they wielded in the era of the middlebrow. Adler continued to make a living lecturing about the Great Books and running seminars for corporate leaders (whom he called "bozos" behind their backs) at the Aspen Institute, which was founded by Great Books enthusiast and Chicago businessman Walter Paepcke. At the height of the Culture Wars debate about the canon on college campuses in the 1990s, Adler made one doomed attempt to revive the Great Books. As Beam devastatingly puts it, "From the culture's point of view, Adler was a dead white male who had the bad luck to still be alive."

Hutchins exchanged his midwestern tweeds for Hawaiian-print shirts, and left the University of Chicago for the Santa Barbara-based Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions—"housed in a phony Greek temple overlooking the Pacific Ocean"—where he hosted gabfests of would-be world affairs worthies in what he envisioned as a recreation of Plato's Academy. But he died feeling that his life's work as an educator and promoter of the Great Books had largely been a failure.

So what did kill the Great Books movement? Beam identifies three culprits: the overzealous salesmanship of Adler and his devotees, which appalled cultural elites; the rise of television; and the battles over the canon that dominated the academic culture wars of the 1980s and '90s. But the Great Books movement was not completely extinguished. The "curious afterlife" Beam notes in his subtitle is captured best in his tour of St. John's College in Annapolis, where the curriculum consists entirely of great texts, and where students still learn Greek and Latin. Beam finds much to admire in the school's rigorous approach, but he also sounds some warnings, not the least of which is the challenge of reading texts without considering context. St. John's orthodox approach to the Great Books often leaves students ignorant of the history of the times in which they were written.

"He persecuted and tortured the heretics," one incredulous student tells a bemused Beam about Saint Augustine.

Beam also spends weekends with the remnant of Great Books devotees who still meet annually to discuss texts. He gained a grudging admiration for their engagement with the classics, although he found them "earnest to a fault" in their sensibility. "Many men and women who love the Great Books love them too well," Beam concludes. Like Casaubon's in *Middlemarch*, their intellectual curiosity too often mutates into pedantry, leaching the life and humor out of the very thing they claim to enjoy.

What is the future of the Great Books? Why hasn't a tech-savvy, second coming of Adler brought us The Great Books 2.0? Beam properly chides the current Great Books Foundation for its snobbishness about Oprah Winfrey's book club, but he acknowledges that the authority upon which middlebrow culture rested is gone, replaced by celebrity. Criticism, once a profession with gatekeepers, is now the enthusiastic avocation of anyone with an Internet connection, and authority is bestowed by sales figures, not deans of culture.

Today we suffer from our own peculiar forms of cultural Babbitry. Technology has trumped teleology, and when we feel the need to assuage our feelings of cultural inferiority, we don't buy 50 feet of books. We buy an iPod. We are keen to signal our mastery of information, which has replaced knowledge as our cultural currency, and the idea of mastering the Western canon seems quaint in an age that publishes books with titles such as *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*.

In this climate, *A Great Idea at the Time* is a useful reminder that things haven't always been this way. Perhaps they might not be in the future either. ♦

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Great Books Redux

An educator strives to rediscover knowledge.

BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

Seminar at St. John's College, 1940

GETTY IMAGES

Perhaps we could write off Roger H. Martin's bizarre decision to the onset of a "midlife crisis" and make our facile diagnosis stick, had he not safely passed the moment for that milestone over a decade before. Or the move might have been inspired by a costly and elaborate bit of field research designed to astound the trustees. Or maybe it arose from a gnawing need to take a whack at reality and go slumming for a spell.

Racing Odysseus
A College President Becomes a Freshman Again
by Roger H. Martin
California, 280 pp., $24.95

Whatever the explanation may be—and it's never made exceptionally clear in this book—here before us stands the fantastical fact: Four years ago, Roger H. Martin, 61 years old and a respected historian, snatched a sabbatical from his eminent post as president of Randolph-Macon, a fine liberal arts college in Ashland, Virginia, and betook himself to wind back his intellectual and emotional clock over 40 years and reenter college for one term as a freshman, as though the trial of his first experience as a college freshman hadn't been, as we discover it was, horrid enough.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, we have here, it would seem, either a nut case of a loon—or a man, noble and true, who has achieved both a wisdom and humility of Socratic proportions. However that may be, what we know we have here is a tale worth reading.

Martin's little adventure did not come *ex nihilo*. He had been fighting a desperate battle with a nasty form of melanoma a few years before embarking on this experiment, enduring the excruciating treatments and deflations of spirit attending a lingering death sentence. But as he rallied and as the metastasizing cancer lapsed into a blessed remission, he found himself, a tired and grateful survivor, prompted to take an almost spiritual accounting of his life, his accomplishments, failures, and still-smoldering hopes alike.

Perhaps he wished to be young one last time before easing finally and irrevocably into his decrepitude; it's an ancient yearning. The gods not allowing that, though, he thought he could at least try to see the world as the young see it today and emerge somehow richer for having done so.

A gamble, we should think, at best. Yet we come to enjoy his tumble of the dice. After negotiations that must have been amusing to witness, Martin gets himself admitted to the freshman class of 2004 at a place prominently mentioned in the previous review: St. John's College in Annapolis, the agreeably archaic institution still hoisting high the banner of the Great Books movement, installed securely at St. John's since 1937. Martin, as it turns out, chose well if not typically.

St. John's does not pretend to serve slackers. Students there declare no majors; practically the whole of the four-year curriculum of original reading in the humanities and sciences comes rigidly set, from Homer to Euclid to Virgil to St. Thomas Aquinas to Descartes to Hegel to Tolstoy to Melville, a daunting course of perennial philosophical and literary works. Classes as such don't exist; no one lectures to legions of the drowsily inert. Instruction, such as it is, happens in seminars and tutorials where students learn dialectically, by engaging in guided give-and-take with tutors—the diminutive title for faculty—and, most of all, fellow students.

Textbooks are pitched: Students read only what authors of the distant past wrote, not what their later interpreters have claimed they wrote. Even mathematics (through close reading of Euclid, for instance) gets tackled this way. The reading list, while formidable, is admittedly narrow and, according to critics of Great Books teaching, impractically so. Yet the very narrowness of the curriculum sharpens the point of the place, the

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idea being not to read many works cursorily but to read a few of them exhaustively and emerge with a trained mind that can grapple with anything else on its own.

This method does not aim at dogma. Students are "told what to study but not what to think," as one "Johnnie" puts it. At St. John's the passion for learning is taken in dead earnest, smoothing manners and elevating tone. Decorum dictates that all members of the community, both faculty and students, be addressed as *Mr*. or *Ms*. with surname appended, a courteous practice: Students are credited for the adults they are or should aspire to be, and faculty, no matter how accomplished in the realm of scholarship, are treated simply as veteran fellow laborers in the vineyards of learning, not as experts demanding, or even especially deserving, deference.

It's a scheme to conjure with. One can well imagine that academic life in America would become a good deal more spirited and urbane if all institutions took this cue and dispensed likewise with the pompous titles of *Doctor* and *Professor*, honorific designations that ought, let's face it, to be limited to perhaps 200 hoary and august people in the country at any one time.

Here is an academic regimen, in short, for neither the loftily smug nor the terminally lazy. Knowledge is to be discovered hot, not spoon-fed cold; it's to be acquired as an earned possession, not purchased as a bankable commodity. Everyone who is not or does not quickly become an inquisitive self-starter is quietly or ceremoniously shamed off the premises. As a prescription for seriousness and a cure for the listlessness of what passes for college work at most degree factories these days, this isn't bad.

And so President Martin goes back to school. But not quite. He follows the full first-term freshman curriculum, but the deal is that he may observe only; he may not participate in seminar discussions, a sensible stipulation. (Nor, we should add, must he write punishingly unreadable essays.) But aside from this bar, he's a class member in full standing, one encouraged as much as his young colleagues to delve deeply into campus life—though not too deeply, as he's married and has two daughters older than his classmates.

Still, he attends a waltz group and makes a proper ass of himself as he declines to dance out of shyness, much as he did 43 years before as a real freshman. He flirts with the idea of joining a chorus. Finally, this former runner settles on crew: He'll row, showing up dutifully for practice on chilly mornings at six along with his bleary, blood-shot classmates. And upon his rowing efforts he hangs many—maybe too many—of the broader lessons he learns during his months at Annapolis, lessons of patience, perseverance, and humility.

But the lessons emerging from the seminar room are the ones we've paid for. The St. John's treatment of the Great Books might stand as the intellectual equivalent of chemotherapy in an era of chronic academic lassitude. For no matter our ages, we are all students in the presence of Plato and Aristotle, and as we might define a classic of anything as something ineffably inexhaustible, we can also say that the classic book keeps giving and giving, even to multiple-degreed college presidents with thinning hairlines.

Martin's lively depictions of his seminars reveal more than he may realize, conveying the efficacy of the method as well as the intelligence and consistent goodwill of most of the participants. A couple of tutors sit at a large table alongside the students and with nothing more than the book of the day before all of them—they're apparently discouraged from taking notes—one of the tutors opens each session with a question ("So where does Socrates come down in this dialogue on whether virtue can be taught?") and the room goes aflame with claim and counter-claim, assertion and qualification, probing query and statement of faith until we can sense, in the reading, that this vibrant scene fleshes out what Plato had in mind.

No hectoring professor lording it over a roomful of bored, incurious wastrels or neophytes, but a group of fundamentally differing minds reaching, gingerly but inexorably, toward some sort of common understanding.

Yet, perhaps unwittingly, Martin points up some of the inevitable weaknesses of this rigorous approach. A serious discussion may require more than a serious subject; it also needs serious discussants. While practically every one of the students he describes (always charitably) acquits himself and herself with an impressive maturity, a few strike us as ill-equipped for an exercise calling for so much steady, self-effacing honesty. One young woman offhandedly dubs Odysseus and his companions nothing more than "a bunch of macho slobs." (Ah, the joys of Youth! Never again will the pleasures of reductive thinking be so keen, dear.) A young man proclaims the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus to be devoid of value and questions the prudence of burning two hours discussing a work that a few minds superior to his own have deemed worthy of reverence for 2,500 years.

These two may be among those students who, Martin says, "speak with more frequency than insight." At least one drops out. Alas, this kind of learning isn't for everybody.

It may be true, as some critics of the Great Books method claim, that its pedagogy implicitly licenses the quarter-thought and fosters a confidence that blooms too early and bids fair to hamper plodding patience in the face of complexity, to say nothing of humility in the face of mysteries resistant to exact formulation and easy sloganeering. Conversing formally about a Great Book cannot ensure that any of its profound, finer elements will lift anybody in the room out of the torpor of trivia, still less that a few weeks of discussion over translations of Homer can make a sharp, perceptive thinker of anybody.

Surely not, but keeping intensive company with Homer, even if only briefly, can begin to make us feel our own smallness before the cosmos, and that is no small benefit. The beginning of wisdom may be the discovery that the sun does not revolve about us.

But nonsense isn't an exclusive prerogative of the younger generation alone. Martin commits a few solecisms of his own, especially ones seeded with therapeutic presuppositions and blossoming into the soft-focused lingo of the talk show and self-help section.

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So eager is he to dip down into the false sophistications of our popular argot that he sometimes seems to be rehearsing for an appearance with Dr. Phil—point taken about inflated titles?—instead of tracing a sober journey of intellectual rediscovery.

What else are we to make of those oily drops of contemporary thinking of the kind accusing Agamemnon of "severe parental abuse"? Yes, one may choose to put it that way. Then again, one may not.

Wandering back and forth between the seminar room and boathouse, café, and Friday-night lecture, Martin observes in passing the lives of the modern iPod-hooked, cell phone-addicted, texting-mad student, and in doing so discovers, without much surprise, that college students now are pretty much what they always were, questing minds and souls trying, by fits and starts, to make headway toward some solid sense of themselves that will help them find a secure foothold in the world.

As the weeks pass from August to December, some of these young people confide in this father-like figure. But most don't, and we understand why. He is living out of season. We can cheer him on even while cringing from time to time over the ultimate silliness of any enterprise whose object has been to transplant oneself in another stage of life. Let no man in his sixties be advised to "hang out," talk of being "pumped" for a race, or speak of Socrates being a "pain in the butt" who "turns people off."

What remains of this quirky account, once Martin's compelling story fades, is a brighter, more luminous prospect of what the life of the mind can still be for those discerning and disciplined enough to opt for the harder road. But we're still left in the end with the chief paradox of a place like St. John's, that no matter how much the college may sell itself as a grand exercise in democracy, where the greatest books lie open to all comers, this model works best when its devotees, teaching and taught alike, hunger to excel, to stand apart as singular, unique—a handy standard to sustain these days, lest we forget that excellence too holds a modest place in the American tradition. ♦

Slice of Life

Transformation, mutilation, or titillation?

BY RONALD W. DWORKIN

Michael Jackson, then and now

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Once, while I was assisting on a "nose job" in medical school, the attending surgeon asked me if I knew what was wrong with his patient's nose. As the surgeon's tone was didactic, I assumed he was quizzing me. I carefully inspected the patient's nose and came up with a list of diseases. A deviated septum? A cartilage disorder? A connective tissue disorder?

He shook his head each time. Finally, he said: "No. The patient has a typical Jewish nose."

I mention this incident to illustrate the danger in writing a heady book about cosmetic surgery and culture. Although one might come up with intricate explanations for why people get cosmetic surgery, cosmetic surgery is ultimately about beauty. People want to look good, plain and simple.

Making the Cut
How Cosmetic Surgery Is Transforming Our Lives
by Anthony Elliott
Reaktion, 196 pp., $19.95

The standard for beauty may vary from culture to culture. In pre-Communist China upper-class women bound their feet, essentially crippling themselves, because small feet were thought beautiful. African women lengthened their necks with stacked rings to conform to their culture's ideal of beauty. But unless a writer wants to impute a false consciousness to these people, and suggest that cosmetic surgery patients don't really know why they do what they do—that only the writer does—then going beyond the question of beauty is unnecessary.

Still, writers do go deeper, especially social scientists; they can't help themselves. Anthony Elliott, an Australian sociologist, does so in *Making the Cut.* And yet my complaint is not that he goes too deep, but that he simply goes where others have gone before.

Elliott gives three explanations for

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the explosive growth in cosmetic surgery in Western society over the last 20 years. The first is the impact of celebrity culture. In Elliott's words, people "are following the cult of celebrity straight to the operating theater." They worship celebrities and want to look like them. "Personal subjectivity in the media age is more and more fashioned in the image of celebrity culture," he writes.

Yet this is just the "beauty" argument dressed up in sociology-speak. Celebrities today set the fashion the way John F. Kennedy did in his day (declining to wear a hat) or the Union general Ambrose Burnside did in his (growing his whiskers down the sides of his face, later called "sideburns"). When Elliott writes that "individuals increasingly take celebrities as objects of knowledge for both the representation and the conduct of social life," he sounds irritatingly like an assistant professor using the "language of discourse" to get tenure. Which is totally unnecessary, since Elliott is not only fully tenured but also the chairman of his department!

Why doesn't he just say that average people want to look like famous people, and be done with the issue? And yet, even if average people do want to look like famous people, the celebrity culture argument fails to explain why celebrities themselves get cosmetic surgery.

Elliott's second explanation for the cosmetic surgery culture is consumerism. In his view, the consumer industry shapes our understanding of who we are and how we should look. He reserves special blame for aggressive advertisers who pitch beauty products to the masses.

Yet what feature of modern America has not been blamed on advertisers and consumerism? Sociologists have been working this angle since the 1950s, when C. Wright Mills accused slick Madison Avenue executives of manipulating people's fears and preying on their "status panic" to get them to buy certain products. This is nothing new. Nor can the advertising industry's aggressiveness explain why Americans are so receptive to the cosmetic surgery message. After all, advertisers can't sell low-calorie cookies; people don't want them. Advertisers can only sell people what they want. Elliott's argument begs the question why people want cosmetic surgery and the form of beauty it creates.

Elliott's third explanation is globalization. In his words: "The rapid pace of economic change today shapes wider cultural imperatives concerning employment adaptability as well as flexibility of identity."

Again, sociology-speak. Again, this angle is old. It is well known that capitalism creates a political economy of social mores, that capitalist principles infiltrate even the personal sphere. In Victorian England, this infiltration led to women crying, "Please, sir, stop, or you'll ruin me," or warning, "Nobody wants an old shoe." People in capitalist societies tend to adapt their understanding of product value—new is better than old, unused is better than used—to the body. Applying market lingo to the cosmetic surgery culture is simply a continuation of this trend. Today's motto might be: "More breast for the buck."

In one way, cosmetic surgery culture does reflect a new economic trend. In the 1930s, the image of the successful man was the portly, mustached banker on the Monopoly game cards. Today, the image of the successful man is youthful-looking and trim. This change reflects an effort on our part to judge a person's character by scrutinizing his or her body.

A job recruiter these days is barred from asking questions about a job candidate's family background or religious affiliation. Nor can he glean much information from references, since people writing bad references often get sued, and fib to play it safe. But a recruiter can still *look* at a candidate. If a prospective employee is trim and well-preserved, the recruiter can infer from this that the person is self-disciplined, judicious, energetic, and well-organized—all the virtues needed to succeed in business. If the candidate takes care of his body, he can likely be trusted to take care of a million-dollar account. Or so the thinking goes. The body has become our most moral organ; judgments about other people's characters are now made visually.

Stay superficial; do not go deep, I said. All right, if cosmetic surgery is all about beauty, then why do people think cosmetic surgery makes them look beautiful? I've often asked this question while anesthetizing patients for these procedures. I can understand a nose job for the patient who looks too Jewish. I can also see the value in a good facelift, not the kind that produces the wind-tunnel look but, instead, makes people say: "Hey, you look well rested. You must have gotten a good night's sleep last night."

But liposuction often makes people

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look ill; the skin overlying the sucked-out area sags and looks dimpled. Breast implants (in non-mastectomy patients) often look ridiculous. I've seen women with what a Frenchman would consider perfect breasts (in the shape of a champagne glass, which was supposedly the breast size of Marie Antoinette) stuff double Ds into their pectorals. Afterwards they look like—well, I'm not sure what they look like; no such animal exists in nature.

The conclusion I've reached about cosmetic surgery is this: Cosmetic surgery is not about beauty in the way that, say, jewelry and makeup are about beauty. Jewelry and makeup adorn preexisting beauty. Sometimes they bridge the divide between an ugly exterior and inner beauty. In either case, they tell men that the woman wearing these things is still full of heat and hormones, still interested in sensual things, still a part of life's universal chase. They invite men to see the woman in a romantic light, where she becomes charming, special, and unique.

Cosmetic surgery is not about the woman. It's about the man—or about the woman if it's a man getting the liposuction. It's about the man's science fiction fantasy of what beauty should be *in the abstract*. The man sees the vague silhouette of sucked-out thighs and protruding breasts, and his fantasy is triggered. The woman herself is insignificant; cosmetic surgery doesn't invite the man to see her as an individual, let alone as a personality. She is neither charming nor special. She is a form, a set of parameters, organic material with curves and bumps. She is the opposite of warm and sensual and alive. She is a thing to poke and squeeze.

Indeed, when I was in grade school on a field trip to an aquarium, I wanted to touch a dolphin to see what it felt like. I was simply curious. It is in that spirit that I would ever want to touch a breast implant. Not exactly what I would call romantic feelings.

My advice to a woman contemplating breast implants or liposuction: Buy yourself a nice pair of earrings. It'll save you both money and trouble, and be more likely to achieve your goal. ♦

Surreal Faith

The dangerous world of a left-wing fundamentalist.

BY MARK TOOLEY

Shane Claiborne is a Christian counter-culturalist and pacifist who went to Baghdad in 2003 to express solidarity with Iraq when the first U.S. and Allied missiles landed. Still in his thirties, he is not an aging hippie but a post-modern, "emergent" evangelical of sorts, who appeals to a new generation of believers anxious to shun traditional evangelical stereotypes.

Jesus for President
Politics for Ordinary Radicals
by Shane Claiborne
Zondervan, 348 pp., $16.99

Jesus for President was published in time for this year's elections, but Claiborne was not backing any earthly candidate; instead he is denouncing the United States as a uniquely reincarnated Roman Empire and, therefore, the enemy of God whom Christians should shun. Shunning violence and profit-making, Claiborne's Christianity demands a new monasticism, which he has attempted to create in his Philadelphia ministry called "The Simple Way."

The America-as-Rome thesis is common now within the pacifist evangelical left, which is especially enraged by the wars of George W. Bush. Many of its adherents rely on the theology of John Howard Yoder, the 20th-century Mennonite who reinterpreted Christ's crucifixion as a renunciation of all violence. Widely popularized by his best-known disciple, Stanley Hauerwas of Duke, Yoder deemphasized Christ's substitutionary atonement and focused, instead, on the church as a new community that rejects all earthly powers.

Claiborne relies heavily on Yoder and echoes Hauerwas, who is fierce in his mocking denunciations of all things American. Supporting Jesus for president, to Claiborne, means accepting the Yoder/Hauerwas thesis: Remove flags from the churches, do not serve in the military, denounce U.S. foreign policy as imperialism, and reject the ostensible materialism of free market capitalism. Claiborne goes further, berating the seductions of technology and science. He confesses to struggling with the idea of publishing a book, with its reliance on 21st-century media. But he ultimately justifies *Jesus for President* by pledging part of the profits for carbon offsets.

Although purportedly rejecting worldly ideologies, Claiborne, like Hauerwas, repeats the secular left's political mantras. His version of the politics of Jesus sounds remarkably like MoveOn.org and Greenpeace, neither of which professes to be christocentric. His colorfully illustrated book is laden with photos of American tanks and bombs and suffering Iraqis who are victimized by the heavy imperial arm of President Bush's AmeriKa, amplified by political and historical assertions by secular leftists such as Noam Chomsky and Harold Zinn.

Ostensibly, according to Claiborne, the Whore of Babylon that John describes in Revelation is the Roman Empire, whose political whoredoms are replicated by modern America, which follows Rome in trying to "slaughter God's love in the world." If the apostle were writing his Apocalypse today, he would use a "phrase such as 'mission accomplished' or describe the image of a flaming oil field under a sky of black smoke."

Claiborne repeats the conventional narrative that early Christians aban-

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doned their martyrdoms to become the empowered oppressors when Constantine Christianized the empire. This betrayal of authentic Christianity continued with the early Puritans of New England, who confused their earthly conquest with God's Kingdom, thereafter setting the permanent imperialistic and genocidal tone of all European Americans for the next four centuries. America's imperialistic hubris became personal for Claiborne when his shame over the impending U.S.-led war in Iraq took him to Baghdad, where he composed a ditty after CBS News asked him whether he was a traitor:

> If this bloody, counterfeit liberation is American ... I am proud to be un-American. If depleted uranium is American ... I am proud to be un-American. If the imposed "peace" of Pax Americana is American, I am proud to be un-American.

Claiborne likes to quote Martin Luther King Jr., not admitting that King himself was a believer in the dreaded "myth" of American exceptionalism. He observes: "How ironic that he was granted a national holiday by the nation he called the 'greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.'" King said those words in his famous 1967 denunciation of the Vietnam war at Riverside Church, a speech that has not aged well because of its glaring naïveté about the communist North Vietnamese regime, whose crimes King did not discern, and which still do not fit the preferred narrative of purportedly Christian anti-imperialists like Claiborne.

"Just as Caesar had his image on everything, America has its stamp," Claiborne laments. "The world is branded with America." America's oppression includes not just military conquests but also economic dominance. Predictably, Claiborne claims that NAFTA and other free trade agreements echo Rome's imperialism. He denounces the globalized economy, describing the worldwide trade thread that brings coffee to America as leaving a "trench-like trail" across a ravaged earth. America's wealth is carried "on the backs of cheaper laborers" overseas, he charges, while American cities are "blighted with hundreds of abandoned factories and a hundred more abandoned homes." So Claiborne on trade sounds a little like Pat Buchanan. But somewhat incongruently, Claiborne more predictably insists that "being born again radically dissolves affection for national borders." He is highly distressed that American churches display American flags, but his concern would be ameliorated if they similarly displayed Afghan and Iraqi flags in "solidarity" with God's family. "Maybe it's time for Christians all over the world to lay down the flags of their nations and together raise the banner of God," he suggests.

What are Christians to do about extreme evil if all violence is precluded? As with most Christian pacifist absolutists, Claiborne is vague. But he suggests that the anti-Hitler conspiracists who tried to assassinate the Führer only fueled "his reign of terror" and invigorated his quest to "rid the world of evil"—a mission that the German dictator evidently shared with George W. Bush, of course. Claiborne quotes Hitler's secretary as claiming "any hopes for peace were lost" after the 1944 attempt against Hitler, as though a peaceful settlement to World War II was averted only thanks to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's failure to uphold his pacifist convictions.

Claiborne liberally quotes from early Christian martyrs who resisted Rome, equally admirable Christian resisters to Nazism, and U.S. military personnel who have repudiated their roles in America's wars, as though all were of a seamless moral garment. Supposedly striving for evenhandedness, he cites America's misdeeds along with Iran's, North Korea's and Saddam Hussein's—though, of course, he never expresses any personal solidarity with any victims of those regimes. He likens his mischievously giving away free pizza in a mall food court as a protest against the profit incentive (and for which he was arrested) to Jesus' overturning the moneychangers' tables in the temple.

On so many different levels, Claiborne lacks moral and spiritual perspective. In his appendix, Claiborne, parroting his theological mentor Yoder, strains to explain away the Roman 13 affirmation of the state as God's instrument for punishing evildoers. He asserts that the "sword" referred to in the text was actually a "short dagger" used in police, not military work. So evidently God countenances "police" actions but not military actions, though Claiborne does not explain the difference. He also falls back on a more traditional Anabaptist teaching that the text empowers the state to employ force but does not permit Christian participation in the state's dirty work.

Besides Yoder, Claiborne relies on deeply heterodox theologians such as John Dominic Crossan, Walter Wink, and Walter Brueggemann, none of whom, because of their rejection of Christian doctrines about Jesus Christ's deity, atonement, and bodily resurrection, would inspire confidence in orthodox Christians. Claiborne himself does not explicitly reject these doctrines, but as with Yoder, he prefers to direct Christianity to other emphases revolving around social action and community building.

In one genuinely impressive anecdote, Claiborne recalls being surrounded by angry inner city hoodlums who trapped him and a friend in an ally while bashing them with sticks. Refusing to run or resist, he instead implored his assailants to desist in God's name—which they did. But Claiborne does not explain how he might have reacted had he come upon a pregnant woman, or child, or elderly person, being beaten in an ally by less spiritually intimidated attackers. Would he simply have looked on in prayerful sympathy?

In *Jesus for President* Claiborne wants Christians to disavow their country and all civil governance in favor of exclusive allegiance to a nonviolent Jesus whose chief mission is resisting "empire." But Claiborne's interpretation of Jesus, his few selective quotations from early church fathers notwithstanding, is largely divorced from the universal church's understanding of the Savior. Instead, Claiborne insists on a narrowly reinterpreted Jesus as distilled by Yoder and several others in 20th-century America for whom Jesus is more social critic than Resurrected Redeemer.

Not many Christians are likely to "vote" for this redefined Jesus. ♦

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William Wilberforce

Noble Reformer

Lessons for today from yesterday's crusader.

BY JOHN R. MILLER

At a moment when a supposedly conservative Department of Justice is trying to weaken modern anti-slavery legislation, William Hague, former leader of Britain's conservative party, has published a biography of William Wilberforce (1759-1833), the conservative philanthropist who led the struggle 200 years ago to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire. Hague's detailed and well-written account gives us the chance to assess slavery, then and now, while also examining the role of conservatives, then and now, in addressing the most serious deprivation of liberty short of murder.

William Wilberforce
The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner
by William Hague
Harcourt, 608 pp., $35

In an age of blurred political parties and blurrier party discipline, Wilberforce prided himself on belonging to no formal group. But of his conservative and religious inclinations, his colleagues had no doubt. And how could they? The author of *A Practical View of Christianity*, he worked to open India to Christian missionaries and urged stricter public morals. He favored tough antisedition laws when he believed England was threatened by the French Revolution, and later by Napoleon. Wilberforce even took positions that many conservatives would look askance at today: opposing the drilling of troops and publishing of newspapers on Sunday, supporting the closing of theaters because of their association with vice, opposing the creation of labor unions.

Yet Hague's painstaking work shows us that, while Wilberforce did take these stands, he was a leader in many reform causes. At the urging of his friend (and later prime minister) William Pitt—the subject of an earlier Hague biography—he fomented an abolitionist movement, led efforts to reform prisons and limit capital punishment to serious crimes, and fought for laws to help the indigent and improve working conditions. He helped create the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals and strove to limit wasteful spending by a monarch he supported.

To some conservatives in his day, Wilberforce was what we would now call a maverick; but closer observation reveals him to be what some would disparage as a "values" politician, seeking within a conservative framework to reform society. And Hague shows how much there is to admire about Wilberforce: the way he avoided entanglement with sweeping, violent movements to remake society and, along with the Quakers and their leaders, pioneered the use of peaceful means of petition and persuasion to further the abolitionist cause. For inspiration, look no further than the way Wilberforce handled the argument that abolishing the slave trade was an imposition of British "values" on the world. He and his allies invoked the message of Genesis—that all humans are made in God's image—as well as the doctrine of Christian love and, for good measure, Adam Smith's economic theories about the value of free labor.

Echoing arguments we would recognize and appreciate today, Wilberforce and Pitt dismissed the efforts of opponents to delay abolition by invoking multilateralism: "This miserable argument, if persevered in, would be an eternal bar to the annihilation of evil," Pitt declared in one of the landmark parliamentary debates on the slave trade. "How was [the slave trade] ever to be eradicated if

John R. Miller served as ambassador-at-large on modern slavery during the Bush administration.

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every nation was thus prudentially to wait until the concurrence of all the world should be obtained?"

Pitt added that if, after recognizing the evil of slavery, Britain did nothing, other nations would conclude that Britain found nothing wrong with slavery, and would similarly fail to act. Pitt's government, at Wilberforce's urging, tried to form a multilateral coalition against slavery, but because of French opposition, Britain had to go it alone.

Equally admirable is the way Wilberforce, after Pitt's death and Wilberforce's own parliamentary victory over the slave trade, persuaded the British government to use the Royal Navy to enforce the law. More than 600 British sailors lost their lives in the freeing of several hundred thousand men, women, and children from slave ships flying flags of many nations.

Today, of course, we know that legal abolition by Parliament in Britain and, later, a civil war in the United States did not end slavery. In absolute numbers there may be as many slaves now as there were in Wilberforce's day. Race and plantation economics may not be dominant factors today, but millions are enslaved in brothels, homes, factories, and on farms. Slavery may be illegal, but it extends into every country in the world, including our own.

How, then, might Wilberforce and Pitt look at today's fight against slavery—and the role of conservatives and faith-based groups?

While Hague addresses such questions only tangentially, good historical biographies—and this is a good one—often give clues in judging how their subjects might have regarded present events, and the actions of contemporary groups and leaders. I suspect that Wilberforce would be dismayed to see that many faith-based groups are not broadening their agendas to embrace the slavery issue. He would be pleased about the advocacy for abolition by Southern Baptists and such organizations as Concerned Women for America, and he would certainly appreciate the help slavery survivors enjoy today from evangelical groups such as the International Justice Mission, World Vision, and the Salvation Army, and Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations such as Caritas and Project Kesher. But I suspect that both Wilberforce and Pitt would be puzzled by the endless international conferences and multilateral resolutions that substitute for aggressive law enforcement against slavery.

Wilberforce would undoubtedly be gratified by George W. Bush's leadership in fighting slavery and mustering bipartisan support in Congress for abolitionist efforts. But he would be mystified by the lobbying efforts of Bush's own Justice Department to stop tougher federal prosecution of pimps and sex slave "masters." (Wilberforce certainly understood that prostitution could and did lead to sex slavery.) Equally mystifying would be the arguments of some conservative politicians that federalist doctrine prevents tougher federal prosecution efforts against slave masters.

William Hague has done a genuine service by illuminating, through the life of William Wilberforce, the spiritual dimensions of conservatism, and by showing that conservatism, faith, and reform are not mutually exclusive. During times of peace and turmoil, Wilberforce never wavered in his devotion to abolition. Naïve to some, impractical and apolitical to many, he led one of the most successful struggles for liberty in human history. That Hague's portrait is especially judicious and nuanced, compared with some recent studies of Wilberforce, makes him all the more impressive. ♦

Postmortem Snaps

Life and death in the old Soviet Union, as seen in black and white. **BY WILLIAM MEYERS**

It begins quietly enough. The introductory picture in Jason Eskenazi's photo book is "Hotel Moskva, Moscow" (1998). The lower right quarter of the image is taken up with the naked back and shoulders of a young woman, as well as the little bit of her face and head that are visible as she looks out a window. Behind her is a lace curtain suggesting Old World gentility, and from the window she looks down on impressive buildings of classic Russian style and an open square in which little figures mill about.

Wonderland
A Fairy Tale of the Soviet Monolith
by Jason Eskenazi
de.MO, 224 pp., $32

Because she is so intent on what is going on outside, the feel of the image is not so much sensual as contemplative; much history took place in the vicinity of the hotel, and presumably it is that history and its aftermath that absorb her.

The Moskva Hotel is located within 100 yards of the point from which Russian roads are measured, so it is an appropriate place for Eskenazi to begin his travels. He spent much of the 1990s photographing the lands behind what had been the Iron Curtain: Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, East Germany, Georgia, Chechnya, Lithuania, and of course, Russia proper. He learned Russian, established friendships, and spent time with Yevgeny Khaldei, the great photographer of World War II whose picture of Russian soldiers planting the red flag atop the Reichstag has

William Meyers's photography project, Outer Boroughs: New York Beyond Manhattan, *is a forthcoming exhibit at the New York Public Library.*

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the same place in Soviet iconography that Joe Rosenthal's picture of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima has in ours.

The 77 black-and-white pictures here are nothing like *National Geographic*'s scenic vistas; they are meant to illustrate the Stalinist slogan, "We were born to make fairy tales come true"—with the understanding that in the primitive version of the story, the wolf gets to eat Little Red Riding Hood.

By spending as long as he did in the former Soviet territories and becoming as familiar as he did with the people, Eskenazi has been able to produce a book of great intimacy. His work, by turns, is grotesque, comic, surreal, lyric, or elegiac, and sometimes includes several of these characteristics simultaneously. He said in a recent interview that he believes "the image is much deeper in our brain stem than language," and many of his pictures seem closer to the psychological depth of genuine fairy-tales than to ordinary photojournalism.

They are the sort of images that, once seen, lodge in the mind. And the impression over and over again is that not just the landscape and the urban environment have been damaged, but that the people, too, are in need of repair.

Among the four pictures from Chechnya, "Bombed-Out Circus" and "Rooftop," both taken in Grozny in 2000, show the destruction that buildings in that Muslim republic have suffered, but "Dead Russian Soldiers, Chechnya" (1996) deals with human beings. On the right we see a close-up of a T-shirt being worn by a young man printed with the faces of the four Beatles, and in the background, to the left, is a heroic Soviet-style statue commemorating victory in World War II. In the left foreground, in some sort of open public space, are the bodies of four dead men, the Russian soldiers, one of them lying face down in a shallow puddle of water.

We do not see the face of the man wearing the T-shirt, but his apparent insouciance is a measure of the brutality of the conflict in Chechnya. And the sight of John, Paul, George, and Ringo juxtaposed with these casually disregarded dead is an example of Eskenazi's talent for composition.

Soviet health care was once held up as a model, but Eskenazi's pictures of care facilities definitively end that illusion. In "Abortion Clinic, St. Petersburg" (1996), the attractive woman on a gurney in the foreground has a look of resignation on her face, while beyond her a woman lying in street clothes has her legs spread for a woman in scrubs; there is no more privacy there than in a nail salon.

'Psychiatric Hospital, Kazan' (1992)

JASON ESKENAZI

The walls of the room in "Abandoned Asylum, South Ossetia" (1997) are covered with graffiti and, although it may be abandoned, there is a man sleeping in the single iron bed, his shoes arranged neatly on the floor. The three little iron cribs in "Maternity Hospital, Kuba, Azerbaijan" (1999) are empty, and the only sign of life is a pigeon perched on one of them. This image testifies to Eskenazi's technical sophistication, especially his feeling for light, but so does "Psychiatric Hospital, Kazan" (1992). Dimly lit men with shaven heads sit in gray coveralls at long tables eating gruel from metal bowls, their hopelessness summed up in the figure of a woman attendant in a white smock standing with her back to them as she gazes longingly out a window.

The pictures of life in rural areas show they have changed surprisingly little from before the revolution. The eight women in "Harvest, Mariel Republic, Russia" (1999) wear what appear to be traditional ethnic dresses and stand in a large field of grain holding scythes. Equally enduring after 70 years of communism are the pagan rituals of people close to the soil. In "Harvest Ritual, Shutilova, Russia" (1999), three ancient women in babushkas sit on the ground "mourning" over a similarly attired scarecrow lying "dead." A draft horse seen in profile in the background reminds us of nature's puissance. And in "Pagan Holiday, Georgia" (1997), a young girl with big white bows in her hair covers her face with her hand and turns away to avoid seeing the severed head of a cow in a nearby wagon.

There are memorable pictures of military personnel in training, of ballerinas at ease backstage, of dachas and graduation celebrations, of movie sets and movie theaters. The torsos of two male figures lie side-by-side in the grass in "Communist Statues, Lithuania" (1998); they have been decapitated, and we can see that they are hollow. In "Millennium, Red Square, Moscow" (2000), a young couple off to the right kiss as they await the future; in the background the storied spires and walls of the Kremlin are lit up and look like Disneyland; in the middle distance dark groups of millennial celebrants shift about, but it is the beer bottles and litter on the cobblestones close at hand that seem to portend what is to come.

In a postscript, Eskenazi writes about the Russians that their inability "to confront their history and loss created a nostalgia for tragedy." This sounds typically Russian, and it is not encouraging. ♦

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"On Sunday pirates fired at the American cruise ship the M/S Nautica, *but the vessel outran its attackers."* —Washington Post, *December 6, 2008*

Parody

MOVE OVER, JACK SPARROW!

Letter of Marque

GEORGE W. BUSH
(STILL) PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING: Be it known, That in pursuance of an Act of Congress, passed on the 15th of December, two thousand and eight, I have commissioned the distinguished guests of The Weekly Standard cruise on board the luxury liner S.S. Minnow to subdue, seize, and take any armed or unarmed Somali pirate vessel in the Gulf of Aden, around the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Dead Sea, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Schuylkill River, a very difficult river to pronounce, let alone spell, deliver said vessels to any U.S. port, such as Guantánamo, in order that proceedings may be had and justice be brought to the abovementioned evildoers. Dead or alive.

GIVEN under my hand and the seal of the United States of America, the 15th day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and eight. Enjoy your cruise and don't miss the ice sculpture competition on the lido deck. Those guys are amazing.

By the President,
GEORGE W. BUSH

Condi
CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
Secretary of State

THE WEEKLY STANDARD patrols for pirates, cruising the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Horn of Africa, August 7-17, 2009, aboard the luxury liner, *S.S. Minnow*. Join us for more than a week of swashbuckling, rum-swigging, and the occasional discussion of politics (if time permits) with Bill Kristol and Fred Barnes—plus stops in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, and Djibouti.

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- Walk the plank with your favorite (or least favorite) writer
- Day One Training: Cannons and Cutlasses
- Wet T-shirt contest sponsored by Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum
- Sumptuous Midnight Buffet—Arrrrrrgh you kidding me?
- Afterhours activities including The Search for Hidden Booty!

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